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WEST WINDS

This One

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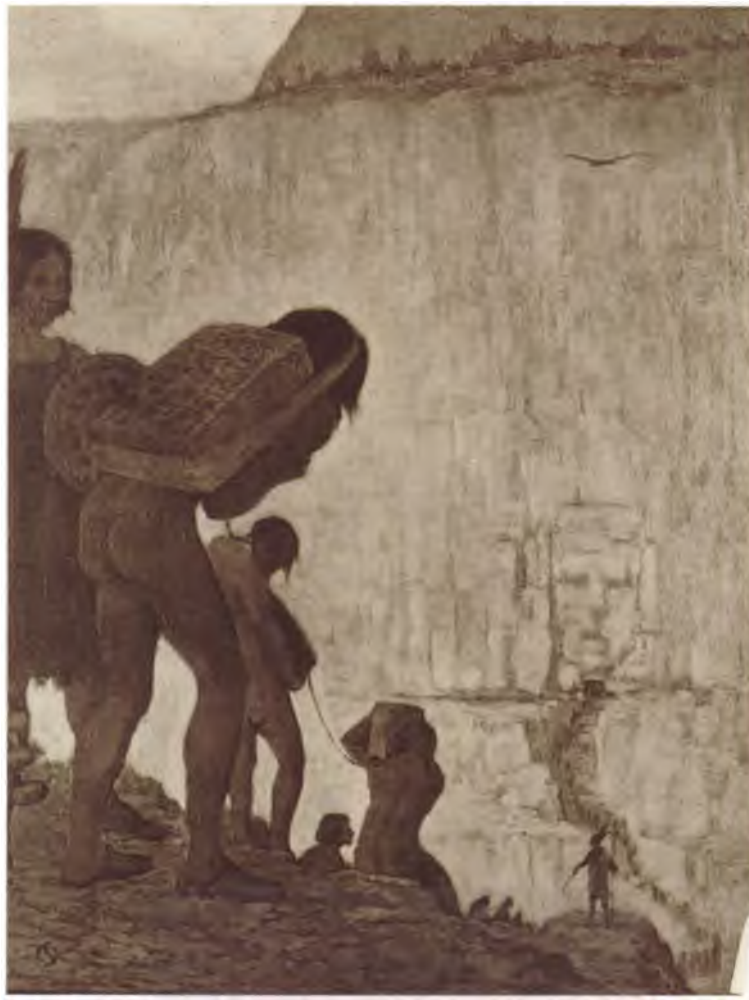
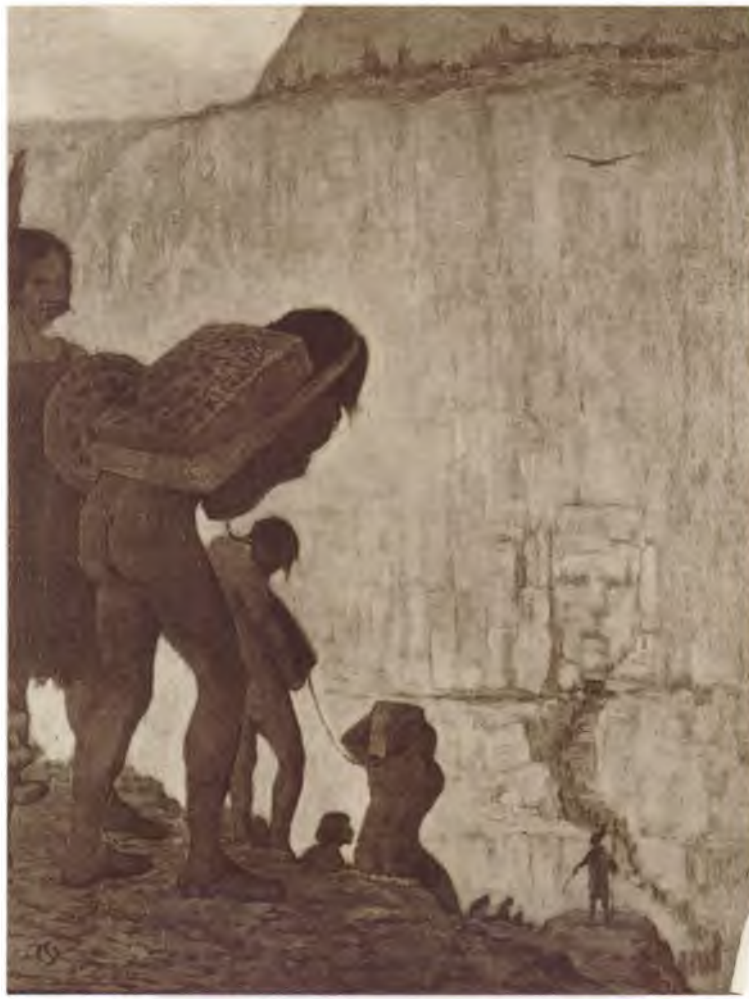


"Processions of Naked Slaves,
Scourged by the Drivers' Whips . . . Those
Who Went Up the Steps Carried Burdens;
Those Who Came Down Were
Empty-handed"
From *The Quest.*



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WEST WINDS

CALIFORNIA'S BOOK OF FICTION · WRITTEN BY CALIFORNIA AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATED BY CALIFORNIA ARTISTS

EDITED BY HERMAN WHITAKER

PAUL ELDER AND COMPANY
PUBLISHERS · SAN FRANCISCO

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FOREWORD

Though, at this hour of our day, it is become trite to draw the familiar parallel between California and Ancient Greece, it yet remains the source from which any utterance concerning western art must proceed. The cold northlands were always the mothers of great deeds. First in conquest, later in the inventions that make for material well-being, they led the world. But while their children were still chanting their boisterous sagas to the clashing of shields, the cadences of real song, rhythms of true poetry, were rising and falling in the southlands in harmony with the surge and recession of blue Mediterranean waves. Not until, by conquest and commerce, there ensued an intermingling of races and the barbarians of the north came under the soft spell of the south, did their rude arts acquire real beauty.

That climate is the mother of art there can be no doubt. In a pleasant land which yields its fruits without exhausting labor, where neither tweaking cold chill nor prostrating heat enervate, the mind will inevitably achieve its highest flights, and these ideal conditions which made the Mediterranean the cradle of the arts, are duplicated in California.

Conditions alone, however, produce no crop—except weeds. First had to come the sowing of the virile pioneer seed which, as under the breath of a mighty wind, was brought in from the four quarters of the world by the gold "rush" of '49. From that wonderful seeding issued those first fruits—Joaquin Miller, Ina Coolbrith, Bret Harte, each celebrating in his or her inimitable way the spread of desert and mountain, misty cañons, cathedral redwoods, oak meads and riven valleys, that were bound in between the snowy-capped

Sierras and the vast blue spread of the sea. After them came a second crop, Norris and London, Gertrude Atherton and Charles Warren Stoddard, Mary Austin, Sterling, Hopper, a host of others, poets, painters, playwrights, good craftsmen who would have stood out in the less crowded literary fields of twenty years ago.

Fortunately, with their multiplication, came a widening of the field. Into the mountain gorges and interior valleys where the prospector roamed and the pastoral Mexican slumbered, the older civilizations have poured their surplus millions, furnishing a diversity of types, life and "motifs" at once interesting and without end. The lumber camps in the heart of the dark forests, hop fields and vineyards, the grain ranchos of the San Joaquin, hydraulic mining, the orange groves of the south, ebb and flow of sea life through the Golden Gate, its roar and bustle along the water fronts, summing it: the spread of life covered in this book, from Old Mexico to Alaska, stands out ready for artistic exploitation against the old familiar background of mountain and golden plain. Or if one loves best the past? The prospector may still be seen following his burro along the stony trails. While more infrequent than of yore, the clink of the Mexican "vaquero's" iron spurs is yet to be heard on the plank sidewalks of hot interior towns.

To some phases of this picturesque life the stories in this book have been attuned—with earnestness and a sincere desire on the part of their writers to depict it faithfully, with beauty and grace.

HERMAN WHITAKER.

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"Daughter of a race of head-burden bearers, she stood straight as a lance under the calabash of linen she was carrying to the river."

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"Even now have I laid by skins . . . that I might marry Zarinska. . . . Even now are her snowshoes bound to her feet, ready to break trail for the dogs of the Wolf."

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"The weary mother ironed the fine linen and laces that another woman's child would wear."

TITLE PAGE DECORATION BY ANNE BRIGMAN

COVER DESIGN BY PERHAM W. NAHL

THE BANDIT'S BETTER HALF

FROM "THE MERRY WIVES OF TEHUANTEPEC"

HERMAN WHITAKER

THE BANDIT'S BETTER HALF

SINCE the jungles of the Mexican isthmus are unequaled for tropical beauty, and as the Tehuanas who walk therein like so many golden Eves surpass all other women in physical charms, it follows that Maria Concepcion Lopez made the prettiest of pictures walking down the street of her native town between rows of graceful palm-thatched *jacales*. Without any straining of terms, it might be added that she furnished a spectacle calculated to inspire respect as much as attention, for in all her proportions Maria Concepcion was truly magnificent. Though barely eighteen, when she stepped on the scales at the *tienda* the bar would snap up to the beam with the weight set at one hundred and seventy, but as she uprose fully five-feet-ten on her small naked feet she managed to carry her golden poundage with an effect of slimness. This impression was accentuated by her carriage. Daughter of a race of head-burden bearers, she stood straight as a lance under the calabash of soiled linen she was carrying down to the river; and if her face lacked that vivacious intelligence which forms the chief beauty of civilized women, the great dusky eyes within its smooth contours were not to be despised. Her bronze charms, moreover, were admirably set in the crimson and scarlet Tehuana costume whose flutterings made a vivid note against the sere brown and luxuriant greens of the street.

After describing certain meanderings that agreed with the convolutions of the original cow path, the street presently emptied Maria Concepcion and her clothes into the plaza where an ornamental iron band-

stand—now mercifully veiled by orange and lemon trees—competed for architectural honors with the *administracion* building, the town's one adobe. In the heavy shade under the *portales* the *jefe-politico,* alias his honor the mayor, sat talking to the *comandante* of *rurales,* his twin in bulk and brownness, and the latter called out:

"*Ole!* Girl! You go to the river? Then have a care. Miguel Naxima Negrete, the *bandido,* was seen yesterday in the *monte* beyond the town."

"And you sitting there at your ease, *señor?*" In answering, Maria Concepcion gave a hint of the shrewish quality that had made her mother the terror of their *cuartel.* "What are we coming to when a lone bandido is permitted to tramp on the toes of the rurales?"

Now, as everyone knows, it were as easy to find a flea in a haystack as to catch a bandit in the labyrinthian jungle, and, touching him in his loved ease, the reflection instigated the comandante's testy answer. "As well seek virtue in thy mother's house, hussy! The worst I could wish Negrete would be to catch thee."

"*Si,* I would pity him." The jefe emitted a fat chuckle. "'Twas only the other day that she clawed the face of Refugio, her lover, because he looked sideways at little Carmela. They say that between her and the old woman, Pedro, her father, leads the devil's own life."

If it were not for fear of upsetting her laundry, Maria Concepcion would have tossed her head in disdain. Instead, she clapped hands to her fine hips and with arms akimbo swaggered impudently around the corner into the next street.

From its end a path led through a jungle that, in its green luxuriance and profuse flowerage, surpassed

the fabled glories of Eden. On either hand mahogany, teak, cedar and the lordly *ceiba* marched in stately sequence, and under them the warm dank air palpitated with a prismatic spray of insect life that was shot, here and there, with the fitful flash of a brilliant bird. From their high tops morning-glories, creepers and climbers of a hundred orders fell in cataracts of living green, transforming the jungle into a stage-setting of fairyland. Now the girl's fluttering crimson would tone down to a dull red in the brown shade of tall cocoas, again leap into sudden flame as she passed through the yellow blaze of a sunlit glade.

Usually the path was lit up and made cheerful by the crimson vestures and lively chatter of women and girls coming and going between town and river. But today Maria Concepcion met not a single soul, and when she emerged, at last, upon the river strand and heard only its solitary voice murmuring among the boulders, she was seized with a sudden terror of loneliness. If it had not been for her late impertinence to the comandante she would undoubtedly have beaten a quick retreat. As it was, she cast timorous glances up and down river before venturing out on the strand.

It chanced, however, that her washing today contained a fine lace chemisette and embroidered petticoat that belonged to her fiesta wear, and she became so interested in their cleansing, held them so often up to the light to note and admire their fineness, that she soon forgot all about the comandante's warning. The bandido had passed completely out of her mind when he was suddenly recalled by a prod from a 44 Winchester in the soft of her back.

"Buenos dias, señorita!"

If Maria Concepcion had been previously neglectful of her safety, she now made up for it by the swift-

ness and length of the leap that carried her from her crouch ten feet out from the bank. Any Tehuana girl outswims the fish, and had it not been for the fine petticoat and lace chemisette that lay in all their innocent whiteness close to the bandido's rude foot, he would have seen thereafter little more of her than disappearing heels. While those hostages remained in his power, however, there was nothing for it but to await developments, and, up to her waist in water, she watched him with eyes of horror that were hardly justified by his appearance.

For, to tell the truth, he departed widely from the traditional bandit type. Unlike the lithe brown fellow with fierce hawk eyes of poem and story, he was small and lean—so very lean that the tight bell-bottomed trousers and short bolero jacket of his leather *charro* suit gave him a withered look. Minus the rifle and sheathed machete which hung at his belt, he would have looked every inch of the shoemaker he had been, before his sudden knife ended the earthly career of the *gringo* planter who had used a miscobbled pair of shoes as an excuse to play football with him all over the plaza. Lest it seem strange, in view of what follows, that a woman of Maria Concepcion's heredity and inches should have quailed in such a meager presence, it must be told that he had added, later, to the gringo, two *peones* who had displayed unreasonably obstinate objections to being robbed. Multiplying as it passed from mouth to mouth, the tale of these killings had grown till it quite discounted in the public fancy the record established by Samson in his little affair with the Philistines. In her frightened vision he loomed sinister, gigantic, and with the return of her breath she replied very respectfully to his greeting.

"Good days to you, señor. Is there anything of mine that you wish?"

Like all Spanish courtesies, her question was never intended to be taken upon its face, but in addition to his departure from type the bandido now displayed a realistic disregard for the craft's romantic conventions. Instead of waiving the very idea he quickly replied, "Si, I want you. Come out—quick!"

Now, less than a week ago, Maria Concepcion had snatched the machete from a quarrelsome suitor and beaten him soundly with the flat. But the bandido was holding, aimed straight at her head, the Winchester, an arm clothed, for her, with the terrors of the unknown. Hastily scrambling out, she stood before him, tamely submissive, while he looked her over with a satisfied eye.

"Young, strong—and pretty." He threw in the last for good weight. "You will do, señorita." After a second stare he explained for what. "See you, this bandido business, while very much the trade of a man, has still its drawbacks. What of bad food, hasty cooking and eating on the run, the stomach of me is nearly done. How of it? Can you cook?"

"Si, señor, none better." The unwise admission came out of sheer gratitude that she was not to be killed out of hand.

"*Bueno!* Then we shall get along very well." While she listened, he ran on to outline her immediate fate. "There is a snug place, see you, in the mountains this side of Oaxaca, that may still be fetched by a man that knows his jungle in a day and a half. High up, it is, above these pestilential fever swamps, with running water and grazing aplenty for beasts, yet so secure that one might search for it a year, or, if found, one rifle could hold it against a rurale corps. With you placed there to do the cooking, I shall be freer to forage, and if it be well done, the cookery, you shall have of fine laces and linen, neck chains,

silver and gold embroideries, the full of a woman's heart. But if it be not good—the cookery,—or you prove tricky!" He squinted evilly along the rifle. "Now—*vaminos!*"

From the jab in the back to the command to march their communications had occupied no more than a couple of minutes—little enough in view of the fact that they saw Maria Concepcion just as surely committed in matrimony as though by the archbishop of Oaxaca himself, safely signed, sealed and delivered. Yet speedy as was the wooing, well calculated, indeed, to set the maidens of colder climes agape and aghast at the mere recital, it was not at all unusual in the tropics where Cupid goes like a steeplechaser, taking all the hurdles from the first kiss to marriage at a single flight. Born of a race of women that gained husbands as often as not by being carried off, and who were not at all particular about the means so long as the necessary end was achieved, it sat well enough with Maria Concepcion's inclination; and short as the time was, it was yet sufficient for her swift feminine mind to review the pros and cons.

In a country where the iron hand of "Tio Porfirio" had suppressed and repressed everything and everybody in sight till all was reduced to one dead level of goodness, the ancient trade of banditry had remained the one refuge for men of spirit. It was invested, therefore, with all of the romantic flavors that distinguish bank-wrecking, stock manipulation and the buying of legislatures in more fortunate climes. In Maria Concepcion's sight the match loomed large as would the capture of some captain of industry or political magnate in the imagination of the daughters of civilization. Finally, as the common folk of the Isthmus seldom marry by priest, she had only herself to consult.

"Daughter of a Race of Head-
Burden Bearers, She Stood Straight as a
Lance Under the Calabash of Linen
She Was Carrying to
the River"

"May I take these, señor?"

Her question, delivered with a nod at the fine petticoat and lace chemisette, may be regarded as the first expression of wifely obedience—just as his gracious answer, "Si, they will serve till I gain thee better," might be cited as an example for more sophisticated husbands. And when, five minutes later, she mounted behind him on the mule he had left tied in the skirts of the jungle, she was no worse off than the millions upon millions of brides for whom captivity and wedlock spelled the same in the days before churches were builded or priests invented.

From the crest of a young pine, a night owl blinked down at the fire that swayed like a red blossom under the breath of the night wind in a cañon below. Leaping, some time ago, under fresh fuel, the flame had revealed the bandido's "snug place," perched like a hawk's nest on a dizzy plateau. Shining across Maria Concepcion's clay cooking pots, its fiery alchemy had transmuted the sere roof of a grass *jacal* into gold, rich in its deep colors as that of the girl's fine shoulders. Inaccessible from below, a trail led around the mountain's shoulder to another cañon and so down to fine pasture in a hidden valley, and, as the bandido had said, the place was abundantly watered. A few yards from the hut, a rope of green water came twisting out of the black night above, to break and fly on in a cloud of prismatic spray. On the other side Miguel's mule was to be seen munching contentedly, while, hunched up close to the fire, its master performed similarly with Maria Concepcion's *enchiladas*. Then all had been peace, but as, leaping again, the fire flashed on the girl's crimson figure, erect and violently gesticulating, the owl shot out on wide wings and flew upward ahead of her cry.

"None but a fool would expect a girl to be content cooped up here with the owls!"

Her complaint marked the arrival of that domestic crisis which is due about the middle of the bridal year. During the first two months of her sojourn there Maria Concepcion had felt and displayed the usual content of a wife in her new estate, and as Miguel seldom returned from a raid without some bit of lace, a yard or two of crimson velvet, or piece of embroidery, pleased vanity had helped to keep her temper sweet. For still another month she had been kept happily busy manufacturing the most gorgeous Tehuana costume that had ever been seen at the spring fiestas, but with its completion the question had arisen, familiar to feminine lips since the dawn of time—of what use were pretty things without a chance to wear them? The thought had brought her first poutings; its expression, the ensuing quarrel.

"What? to be set against a wall, a target for rurales?" Miguel had replied when she suggested a visit to Oaxaca during the fiesta; and being possessed in full by his race's natural jealousy, he had set a black and stony face against her going alone. Worse! Whenever he left the plateau, he guarded against her taking French leave by hiding her finery in a secure place which days of industrious search on her part had failed to reveal.

This, any bride will agree, was taking a mean advantage, and Maria Concepcion had found it harder to bear because of certain radical changes in her opinions and viewpoints. The adage "A man is never a hero to his valet" would have been better said of his wife, for in her candid gaze he stands out, stripped of the honors and dignities that hide his weaknesses from the world. In the last two months Maria Concepcion had caught a severe case of the family point

of view; than which there is nothing more cold, cynical, malignantly truthful. In her rather scornful eyes Miguel no more loomed sinister, gigantic. In fact, she rather wondered that anyone should be such a fool as to permit himself to be robbed by such a person. Lastly, she had been attacked by that itch for reconstruction which, seizing upon brides at the altar, drives them on to make over their husbands like so many last year's bonnets. Having had her full of romance, she was now obsessed by all of a woman's natural passion for respectability—indeed, the present quarrel had arisen from her suggestion that Miguel return to work at his trade in town.

He, however, displayed the usual masculine contumacy. "What?" he now sputtered. "I, a bandido, become a cobbler of shoes for folk that run at the very sound of my name?"

With the wife's usual discernment, Maria Concepcion plainly perceived that nothing could be accomplished in the face of such a conceit, and she addressed herself at once to the congenial task of reducing it. "A bandido, *caramba!* a fine bandido thou art! Forgetting the gringo, an accident, and the two peones, shot, most probably, from behind a bush, tell me what person of importance lays his death at your door. A bandido, *de verdad?* A robber of clothes, rather."

Now, if Miguel had stooped from his estate as a bandido in good practice so far as to lift an occasional piece of fine lingerie from a bush where it was spread to dry, it had been done altogether for her, and stung by the rank injustice of the accusation, he came bouncing upon his feet. "A robber of clothes, say you? *Maldito!* Whose vanity was it that set me to gaining clothing in place of good silver?"

But he who would join battle with a woman must not expect the courtesies of war. Ignoring his anger,

she proceeded to pour the acids of scorn upon the raw wound. "Si." She nodded her pretty head. "In every *cantina* on the Isthmus it is told what a *cochino* you are. 'Miguel a bandido?' Calixto, the rural, told it to me, one day. 'Let me but catch the fool and I'll make of him a cook.' "

"Ah-r-r-r-r!" It was the last straw, and venting his passion in a prolonged howl, Miguel snatched up the machete with which he had just been cutting faggots.

Undoubtedly he merely intended to use the flat, and seeing that it is the usual arbiter in Isthmus family discords, there is much to be said in its favor. Its excellences have been proved in the daily life of thousands of households. It was, however, no longer Maria Concepcion, the timid girl, that faced him, and as he swung to strike a strange thing happened. Snatching up a thick faggot, she disarmed him with one blow that almost broke his wrist, felled him with a second, then while he lay writhing, drubbed him soundly as long as her breath held out.

Yet in spite of its thoroughness, was there nothing malignant about the chastisement. When, bosom deeply heaving and sweating freely, she stood, arms akimbo, looking down upon him, her big dusky eyes expressed only the necessary severity of a Spartan mother. Her question might very well have been addressed to a refractory child.

"Now will you cobble shoes?"

And like a small boy, Miguel ruefully regarded her from under his raised arm. "But, *queredita?* He will have me shot, the comandante, if I so much as set foot in the town!"

"And if there be a pardon to the fore?"

He hesitated—then as she raised the stick, incontinently yielded. "Si! Si! Undoubtedly, si!"

Again like that mother, her gentle pat on the shoulder rewarded the promise.

"Bueno! Now shall I make a *dulce* to stuff the sweet tooth. And when we return to town I shall love you, my shoemaker, more than twenty bandidos."

Not that Miguel really meant to keep his promise. While she was bringing fresh water to prepare the sweetmeat his eyes traveled to his rifle where it leaned against the jacal. Again when she leaned over her cooking his hand fumbled thirstily with the knife at his belt. Yet though she must have sensed danger in his gloom, she moved quietly about her work, chatting happily about their future life in town. After he had eaten the dulce, moreover, she spread her zarape beside his in front of the fire, and five minutes thereafter fell fast asleep.

Leaning upon one elbow, he looked down on her quiet sleep. Though the firelight stained the blue steel of his knife, it was to know no other color, for, strengthening memories of companionship that were none the less pleasant for being varied by kittenish humors, came grateful thoughts of her fine cookery, the light *tortillas,* toothsome meat *chilis,* sweet dulces, that had spread a layer of fat over his lean ribs. Though she lay at his mercy, he knew that he could never bring himself to mar her smooth flesh by so much as the scratch of a pin. He had been caught in his own trap. Full well did he realize, now that it was too late, which of the twain had been led into captivity that day they rode on one mule away from the river.

He was not, however, quite ready to give in. Withdrawing by slow inches from her side, he crawled on all-fours into the jacal, and when he came out again some minutes later he was bowed under a bundle that held all her finery. After depositing it in the

scrub at the head of the trail he returned and led away the mule, moving with such caution that Maria Concepcion was not disturbed. Indeed, having replaced her finery in its hiding place, he had dropped down from the mountains into the fat jungles of the *tierra caliente* before she was awakened by the chills of dawn.

And it was well for him that he was out of range of her scorching black eyes. If she could have laid hands on his collar just then! But at that safe distance he felt brave enough to shake a hardy fist at the distant blue of the mountains. "A shoemaker? Caramba! Fortunately, these women have as many minds as the day has minutes. By the time I return 'twill be something else."

Nevertheless and in the face of this philosophic utterance, he stayed away a full day longer than his habit, nor turned his face homeward till he had insured a welcome by levying tribute on a mule train of rich Oaxaca stuffs. With that at his saddle-bow he was able to hum a tune as the mule took the bends of the trail from the cañon upward.

But the refrain died and his spirits evaporated when, instead of a cheerful fire, odors of cookery, mingled crimson and gold of Maria Concepcion's rich presence, he found only cold ashes and silence on the plateau. A hurried trip to the dry cave where he had hidden her clothing slightly reassured him, for whatever her feeling might be for himself, he could not possibly conceive of her deserting that. Making himself as comfortable as he could, he put in a lonely day and two nights awaiting her return; whereby he was afforded an excellent opportunity to contrast the discomforts of bachelorhood with his late pleasant conjugal ease. Indeed it was the startling contrast that drove him forth, at last, to seek her.

If he had waited a little longer he might have saved himself the journey, for not only had he correctly estimated her devotion to her finery, but he might have added thereto her natural woman's determination to have her way. While Maria Concepcion had hot-footed it down to the town on the very morning that Miguel stole away, she had stayed just long enough to receive the comandante's assurance that "the peones did not count and the country was well rid of the gringo." Indeed, had it not been for the needs of a profession that required him to do most of his traveling by night and rest while Maria Concepcion was legging it back homeward through the day, they must have met on the road. As it was, he spent two weary days watching the girls and women washing at the river, before he learned from a child that she had come and gone. Ten days had slid by since he had seen her, on the evening that he descried, from far down the cañon, the smoke of her hospitable fire against the sky.

Even at that distance it set his mouth watering at thoughts of her comfort and cookery, but professional suspicion denied the call of his hungry body. Suspecting a trap, he laid low till dusk and watched her for a full hour from the scrub at the head of the trail before going forward to receive the warmest welcome she had ever given him.

"I went to see my mother," she answered his questions. "The night you gave me the slip I dreamed she was sick to death of a *fiebre*. Caramba!" Her pretty nose curled up in disgust. "I might have saved me my legs. When I walked in she was delivering to my father the beating of his life—just such an one," she finished, playfully pulling his ear, "as you will get the next time you play me such a trick. 'Twas well that I did not catch you that morning."

Though this was a fine opening, to his great satisfaction she never even mentioned shoemaking, the nearest approach to it being made when she cursed with various eloquence the crop of blisters the trip had raised on her feet. In fact, she was so tired that sleep claimed her in the very act of examining the Oaxaca stuffs.

What of the wear and tear of his late anxiety plus present good feeding, Miguel also fell into deep sleep that was presently disturbed by a frightful nightmare. He dreamed that he had fallen, at last, into the hands of the rurales, and so life-like it all was that he actually felt the cords with which they were binding him bite his wrists and ankles. Indeed, the pain was so sharp that he awoke, yelling, to the sight of Maria Concepcion putting the last knot on a most artistic job of pinioning.

"What means it?" She did not answer his question till she had saddled and led out the mule. "It means that I have gained a pardon from the comandante. 'Twill be granted the day you are seen at work in the shop I have rented upon the plaza."

Then, making no more of his kicks and curses than if he had been a naughty babe, she lifted him upon the mule, cinched his feet from stirrup to stirrup, and led off down the moonlit trail.

"Tack, tack! tack, tack! tack, tack!"

Usually it would be hard to find a more cheerful sound than a shoemaker's busy poundings, but, pulsing through the somnolent heat of the plaza one hot afternoon six months later, Miguel's hammerings carried a note dismal as though he were making a coffin.

Unhappy though it was, the sound yet failed to express the half of the gloom that enwrapped his soul. While pegging the heels of the jefe's riding boots he

cursed beneath his breath them and their owner—whom he could see in the middle of a comfortable *siesta* under the portales across the way—his hammer, thread, needles, implements of a detested trade, finally, the entire scheme of things to which Maria Concepcion's masterly stroke had consigned him.

"You will be thanking me six months from now," she had declared in answer to his revilings, on the day she had dumped him down in the shop. "For we can live finely on the half of your earnings, and the remainder we shall save."

And at first they had surely prospered. The romance of having a bandido to cobble one's shoes drew, for a month or two, such a roaring trade that strangers coming into town sometimes mistook the shop for a cantina. But after the novelty had worn off the custom filtered back into older channels; a process that had been unduly expedited by his loss of prestige when Maria Concepcion haled him out of the cantina one day and ran him home across the plaza. Then, to cap all, the jefe-politico, comandante and other dignitaries of the *alta sociedad* had simultaneously perceived how his past reputation might be made to serve their own present needs.

"See that they be finished today—if you value the skin of your back," the jefe's *mozo* had called out as he flung the boots in at the window an hour ago, and, as Miguel well knew, that was all the pay he would be likely to get. And so it was going every day. Now the jefe, tomorrow the *prefecto,* next the comandante, it was always one or the other, and now, for a change, they came all together. For he had no more than finished the first of the jefe's heels before the comandante's orderly appeared at the door.

"A dozen pair of *guarachas,* señor, for the rurales. Cut them at once."

Coming on top of his other troubles, the peremptory order snapped the slender remaining thread of Miguel's patience. "At once?" he yelled. "May the seven devils of Cuatla get thee, burro! Here be the jefe's boots and the shoes of the prefecto's daughter which she must have to dance at the *baile* of the alta sociedad, and now a dozen of guarachas to be cut and strung with lacings! Caramba! Have I one hundred hands or only sixty?"

"In consideration of your many banditries, you are lucky to have any," the orderly growled, passing out. "Next time you cross the plaza, observe, señor, the handless arms of Juan Cabral, the beggar. And his were simple thieveries."

"He, at least, has ease to enjoy his alms," Miguel grunted. After the orderly was gone beyond earshot, he defiantly added, "And let me tell you, Señor *Tonto,* banditry with all its risks is to be preferred a thousand times over to this."

For some minutes thereafter he sat without movement, gloomily balancing the risks attendant upon the neglect of any of these conflicting orders. Having concluded that it was safer to take a chance with the civil than the military authorities, he had just laid aside the jefe's boots with the prefecto's daughter's shoes and was stropping his knife to begin on the guarachas, when Maria Concepcion came bustling in. Though it was now a full year since Miguel had carried her away from the river, she was the same strapping lass who had learned the business of kidnaping at his hands.

"Let me but get him to the shoemaking," she had told her Aztec gods on the plateau, "and I will ask nothing more." But now that her wish was fulfilled, having, moreover, usurped their prerogative of molding man in their likeness, and worked Miguel's obed-

ient clay till it showed the wet print of her thumb all over; with that supreme instinct of womanhood fully satiated, she surveyed her handiwork with the usual dissatisfaction of the artist in his creation. As she had met the orderly crossing the plaza and received from him a hint to see that his master's order was quickly filled, she had special cause for irritation and proceeded to vent it at once on Miguel's head.

"How are we to live," she demanded at the close of a long tirade, "with thee mending free for the entire alta sociedad? Why did you not stick at the banditry?"

"Wh-h-y?" Stammering it, Miguel raised appealing eyes to the chromo of the Virgin Guadaloupe on the wall in protest against this astonishing exhibition of feminine inconsistency. "*Santissimo Trinidad!* She asks why. *She*—that brought me in, bound and trussed up like a fowl!"

But Maria Concepcion's pretty nose merely rose a degree and a half higher. "What of it? I had never dared such a trick had you been but the half of a man. With plenty of food and fine clothing to spare, a blind beggar might have seen that 'twas only a beating I lacked for perfect happiness. But think not that I will stand for it—to toil and moil for a man *enganchared* in free labor to the alta sociedad. No, señor, there are fresher fish to be had for a fry. *Adios!*" And turning with such suddenness that her crimson skirts flew all about her, she shot out of the door and vanished, as it were, in a red cloud of indignation.

As it was not the first time she had threatened to leave him, Miguel was not alarmed. Shaking his head over the unfathomable contradictions of the sex, he fell to work on the guarachas. When she failed to return at dusk he concluded that she must be spend-

ing the night with her mother; nor did her absence during another day seriously disturb him. If he went out to look for her that evening, his action was prompted more by discomfort than fear of desertion.

He headed first for her mother's, but a chance meeting with old Pedro, her father, saved him the doubtful privilege of interviewing that redoubtable dame. "No, she has not stayed with us," the old man assured him, adding with the cynicism of his age and experience, "Thanks be to God! One woman is enough to addle the peace of any household. Be grateful an' she never returns."

From Don Pablo, the storekeeper of the plaza tienda, he learned, a little later, that Maria Concepcion had been seen in talk with Chano, a ruffling blade of an *arriero,* whose mule-train ran through the town on his regular journeys between Tehuantepec and Oaxaca. But he had no certain news until, nearly two weeks later, a *cargador* in the Oaxaca pottery trade dropped into the shop to buy a new pair of guarachas. All that time Miguel's feelings had been running the gantlet back and forth between anxiety and resentment, and while cutting out the sandals he delivered himself of a homily on the frivolity and ingratitude of women in general.

"Si." The cargador, who was aware where the shoe pinched, indulged himself with a covert grin. "Si, they listen best to the whistle of a stick, the women. That reminds me, señor—I saw Maria Concepcion in Oaxaca."

"What?" Miguel cried with his first breath. "My woman?"

"Si. She was flaunting it in her best with Chano, the arriero. He had just given her the loveliest of beatings, and she was happy and full of chatter as a paraquet."

Knife suspended over his leather, Miguel sat and stared. Than an odor, there is nothing so stimulative to the imagination and, drifting in just then at his window, a breath of wild limes brought in by some errant breeze from the jungle beyond the town revived memories that were almost crushed under the weight of his daily labors. Once more he saw the distant purple of the Oaxaca mountains, veined here and there by the trails that fell, twisting like yellow snakes, from upland pine country into steaming jungles; the deep shady cañons, streaming silver of warm rivers. The freedom and beauty of the old life in the open was reflected in the sudden lights of his face.

But they died, very quickly, the lights.

Than he, no one knew better the truth of Maria Concepcion's assertion that he had been a "bandit more by luck and accident than inclination," and full well did he realize his hopeless loss of reputation. Brought in by a woman, tied like a calf, to be dismissed with a kick and a cuff to his trade! A fine desperado, forsooth! Even the children would hoot at the very idea of suffering robbery at his hands, and, looking down the future, he saw only a long and dreary vista of working days .

"Surely they are ungrateful, the women." The cargador prodded him out of his reverie. "'Tis sad that she never felt the weight of your hand."

Miguel shook his head. During the last two weeks many conjectures and surmises, dim searching for causes, had been shouldering each other around under his skull, and now clearing suddenly, they gave him flashing insight into the profoundest of feminine instinct, that which, in spite of its ingratitude, had worked through the ages for the good of the race. In the bitterness of his soul he raised his voice and let it escape.

"As you say," he sighed, "we are of no service to the women, we soft ones."

Noting the comfortable plural, the cargador closed an eye and grinned at the Virgin Guadaloupe upon the wall.

BUFO, THE MASCOT

ELIZABETH ABBEY EVERETT

BUFO, THE MASCOT

A SCURRYING noise, like the rapid sifting of sand among the rocks and sagebrush of the desert slope, and a tiny piece of the gray and black and reddish-brown hillside, suddenly dislodged, appeared to be slipping swiftly away from the crunching sound of approaching footsteps. Presently it came to rest farther down; to the casual glance, there was no sign of life or motion among the gray boulders, the blackened sagebrush, and the reddish sand. But that was merely because no casual glance could dissolve the spell of the desert wizardry, —the spell which yields only to the power of the Practiced Eye.

The eye that followed the whisking bit of hillside detected it at once as one of the desert's children, and marked him where he came to rest. His horny little back reflected the desert's colors; he was small and brisk and very much alive. Not much larger than a silver dollar, he flattened his round body on the warm sand, then pushed that body up by straightening his muscular forelegs; whereafter he swelled his handsome yellow satin vest, in the manner of horned toads, and thought well of himself. When the crunching sounds began once more, he flattened again and whisked away.

In this way had he baffled pursuers innumerable, and now he felt no fear. He was quite unprepared for the incidents of the next few moments; for suddenly a soft gray tent dropped over him, and a big paw shaped somewhat like his own helpless little brown ones, but efficient and compelling, scooped him up. In that moment of stress many incipient emotions

struggled in the ganglia of his horny little head; but the chief one, that which had helped to preserve his race through generations, found mastery, and his captor stood contemplating a little dead horned toad, a mottled disk curiously scalloped as if it had been cut out of paper by an ingenious child.

"Well, Brother," a big voice boomed out, "it isn't worth while to die over it."

Finding that the game of dying did no good, the toad came to life suddenly and attempted to make off with scurrying footsteps; but a restraining string tethered him to the band of the gray sombrero, and prevented his retreat.

He had no means of knowing that his new friend was Neal Hammond, the young Goldfield mining engineer. Even from the toad's point of vantage on the sombrero's brim he could not read the thoughts inside; neither could he see the vision that dwelt there, of a bright face framed in curling tendrils of hair, a smiling girl face that joyed in kittens and all kinds of cunning, cuddling, baby things. He did not know that his own relation to the wearer of the sombrero was based largely upon the fancy of how she would smile at the funny bright eyes and round, scalloped body. The toad's own visions were of sunshiny spots and succulent flies.

In spite of this difference in the point of view, a sort of good comradeship grew up between the man and his pet during the months that followed. From the hazy recollections of a zoology course, Hammond had rescued the name of Bufo, inaccurate, but entirely satisfactory to them both. On their long hikes together Hammond would call:

"Hello, Brother, are you there?"

Bufo always responded with a scurry of feet on the sombrero's brim.

"Don't lose yourself," Hammond would caution, "or you will never see Lady Blue Eyes. Neither will I, for that matter, unless we strike pay streak. You are our mascot, remember, so stay on your job."

Bufo did stay on his job. His companionship lightened some dreary hours, especially when a loose rock in the Jumbo Mine laid Hammond up for a week with an injured foot. The excitement of catching flies and offering them for Bufo's consumption usually occupied the better part of the morning, and relieved the tedium of enforced inactivity. It took quite a bit of engineering skill to find the exact angle behind Bufo's impassive countenance at which a fly should be held to attract the notice of the little slanted, bead-like eyes; holding it in front aroused no interest whatever. When, however, the tempting morsel crossed the line of his vision, there was a quick twist, an unerring thrust, and, with a contented swallow of his yellow throat, Bufo settled back into placid immobility.

"You've got some class, old boy," Hammond commented, after studying the process attentively, one day. "You'd make the fortune of a south-paw artist, if you could teach him your aim. Show me the trick."

And Bufo, pleased with his friend's praise, swallowed happily and swelled his satin vest, but kept the secret.

Left to his own devices, his favorite amusement was to patrol the room, keeping close to the wall all the way. Obstacles were to be climbed over, not gone around. A pile of magazines on the floor furnished him many hours of employment. Around and around the room he would go, always coming to the same four-inch obstruction, always trying with his futile toad hands to clutch and climb and scale the coveted summit, falling a dozen times on his poor scaly back with his handsome yellow, pebbled vest-front upper-

most, until he could get his horned head down and with a push of his powerful neck muscles flip himself over and then climb again. Sometimes he succeeded; sometimes Hammond's big hand would swoop down and set him on the desired elevation and he would hear Hammond's big voice:

"At it again, are you, Brother? Well, there's a lot of us toads here in Goldfield; around and around the circle and always up against the same hard old proposition that takes a fall out of us most of the time. Keep at it, my boy; you're as far along as I am."

Bufo always listened and sympathized; at least, he winked his bright eyes and turned his head with a quick motion suggestive of flies. After a few moments of silent contemplation of the sad state of affairs which had been brought to his attention, he would climb down with an air of judicial dignity and begin once more his laborious pilgrimage.

When the foot was well, they both welcomed their release into the open; and, with Bufo returned to his tether on the sombrero's brim, they took more hikes.

It was on one of their longest tramps, while Hammond dozed in the shade of a boulder, that Bufo, ruminating on his gray felt platform, heard a buzzing whir-r-r from a crevice just above him and saw a flat, threatening, malevolent head thrust toward him. At the sight, a thousand years of racial fear and hatred stirred in the yellow satin breast. Through the ages, that sound had given skill and speed to those futile saurian feet, so ineffectual in climbing, so swift in flight. With a wild scrabble on the felt hat brim, in the strength of mortal terror, Bufo broke his tether, dropped to Hammond's shoulder, knee, boot, the ground; and scuttled to shelter under a ledge of rock.

"Hi there, Brother, you don't change cars here!" called Hammond.

With the keenness of desert practice he marked the spot where Bufo had disappeared, and soon dragged him forth; but only to shove him into a gray flannel shirt pocket and button him in securely. Then Bufo heard the rapid tap-tic-a-tap of the geologist's hammer. If, in the recesses of his dim elemental brain, he had harbored any hopes of an enthusiastic welcome, the sound of the hammer explained his treatment. He was used to its vagaries; it was likely to halt a walk at any stage, or interrupt a conversation. This time its monotonous clamor was punctuated by exclamations and then a shout. Presently he was jerked blinking from his gray flannel guardroom.

"See the yellow streaks, Brother! It's gold, the gold we've been looking for. Tons of it under that dyke; and you've found it, old boy. We'll call it the Bufo Mine."

Hammond went back to the rock where he had dropped his hat and note-book. He was not dozing now, and he, too, heard the clicking bur-r-r and saw, on the ledge above where he had been seated, the flat menacing head swaying above the threatening coil.

"Hello, old fellow, you think you've got something to say about this, do you?" A few well-directed stones ended the argument, and as Hammond secured the rattles he remarked, "We'll keep this souvenir of the protecting dragon to show the Lady. I judge it was our friend here that sent you down the hill in such a hurry, to discover that rhyolite dyke, Bufo, old boy. In strict justice, I suppose the mine ought to be named *The Side-winder,* but probably she would rather call it *The Bufo.*"

And Bufo, well pleased with himself, winked his bright eyes, and swelled out his yellow satin vest and scrabbled with his ineffectual saurian feet on the hand that held him.

SHOVELNOSE KELLY, MASTER AND OWNER

SHIRLEY A. MANSFIELD

SHOVELNOSE KELLY, MASTER AND OWNER

JOHN KELLY, A. B., otherwise known as Shovelnose Kelly, ex. Am. Ship *Harvester,* was beating slowly up East Street, making short tacks, as he all but collided with various pedestrians and signposts. Two shutter-like swing doors, showing to leeward, brought him up all standing, or, one might say, all rolling, for Shovelnose was sadly waterlogged, almost a derelict.

S. K. bent all his energies to make those screen doors, and a welcome armchair within, but he got underway on the wrong tack, drifted down to the edge of the sidewalk, fouled with and sank to rest on one of a number of empty beer kegs that ornamented that hospitable shore.

Unmistakable relief showed in the old tar's face as his clothing absorbed the water that had been run in on the end of the empty keg, and as the surplus slowly trickled down his leg, he started up a chanty:

"Blow—ow the man—hic—dow—own Bullies,
Blo—ow the—hic—dow—own—"

His head sank lower and lower, till with a final "Aye, aye, sir—hic! Keep 'er full!" he slumbered. Wayfarers and seafarers alike smiled as they listened to his deep-sea fo'castle snore.

"Wm. A. Butts" was another name on the last crew list of the good ship *Harvester,* third line from the top—hair, red; eyes, blue; height, six feet two inches; age, thirty; nativity, Cork, U. K.; capacity, second mate. So Butts was a gentleman, with a handle to his name, and must be addressed as "Mister." He stood the captain's watch at sea, and ate at the second

table. He was the nether millstone, as it were, that ground the poor sailor man, and was in point of fact more proficient with a belaying pin than the mate himself.

Mr. Butts, seated in an armchair behind those swing doors, slowly opened his eyes; got his bearings, and made a slightly uncertain course to the door. As he passed out, a familiar figure asleep on a beer keg caught his eye. A big policeman in the foreground was shaking said figure by the nape of the neck with his left hand, while the right, with the aid of his stick, was sounding a Northwest passage between the fourth and fifth ribs.

One second later, Mr. Butts was after the policeman like a pariah kite after a dead coolie. While *he* might and would manhandle his watch, individually and collectively, he objected to any one else taking the job on.

With a roaring "Belay that!" he swung a husky fist on the point of the copper's jaw. Another blow on his retroussé nose followed so swiftly that it added momentum to his fall. His sleep was long and sweet.

When Mr. Butts' "Belay that!" smote the ear of S. Kelly, it was as the pibroch to the Clan na Gael. Coincident with the copper's fall was Kelly's rise, and seeing a man down, what more natural than that he should follow quarterdeck precedent and kick him? This he proceeded to do, prodding the policeman's hull with his toe, feeling for a soft spot where his energies would not be wasted. Before he found one, however, Mr. Butts, in order to keep in practice, laid Shovelnose beside the policeman.

At this stage of the game, the "Black Maria," homeward bound with a small crew, hove to, abreast of the riot. The principals were soon in irons and shipped aboard. "Thirty days" was handed to each

by an unsympathetic judge, and long before the expiration of that time, quarterdeck and fo'castle met on equal terms.

After nursing his wrath and bruises for two days, and quite as though resuming a previous conversation, Mr. Butts remarked one morning, "Yes, I would give three months' advance money to have that hook-and-thimble-eyed looking policeman aboard the old *Harvester.*"

"Ferget it," said Kelly. "Bein' cooped up in this ol' jug's wot's strainin' yer timbers. This ain't nothin',—I had solitary confinement once fer a whole month."

"Huh! Anyone could tell by the cut of your jib you were a convict," vouched Mr. Butts.

"Convict nothin'," retorted Shovelnose, "I never got mor'n ten days before. It wos you as wolloped the cop as got us—"

"Stow it—stow it! you ungrateful swab," Mr. Butts interrupted. "I was simply trying to tow you clear of the law, when you jumped on the police. But, never mind, give us your tale of solitary confinement."

Shovelnose reached into the cavernous pocket of his monkey pea-jacket, pawed round for a while, and bringing forth the remains of a badly battered cigar, bit it in half. Mr. Butts refused the burnt end, and chewed away contentedly.

"Well," he exclaimed, after a long pause, "have I got to extract that yarn out of you with a watch tackle?"

Kelly shook his head as he solemnly regarded his shipmate. "I was just tryin' to make out how old I was when my ol' woman went into winter quarters in the work'ouse, an' I stowed away on an ol' barque out of Liverpool. It was a Scotch barque, the *Earl Derby,* the hungriest damn thing that ever gathered

barnacles. Pound an' pint, accordin' to the Act, with burgoo fer breakfast fer the watch that had the eight hours out. Not like the patent mush you get in these fancy Yankee windjammers. Blast me! It was thin as beef tea, with big balls of raw oatmeal, that you could smash up and thicken it with.

"Well, when we gets 'er moored longside the dock in Boston, me clothes fit me like a sojer's coat'd fit a capstan bar. I was so thin the watchman couldn't see me when I swarms down the headlines on the dock.

"Me next ship was a whaler, skipper and mates all from Cape Cod an' the Vineyard, with a crew of Western Islanders mostly, me an' three Kanakas bein' the exception. We was bound round the Horn for Ponape in the Caroline Group. The ol' man had his wife an' two kids aboard. We called 'em kids, though the girl was eighteen an' the boy twenty. Both of 'em could reef, hand, an' steer, like any ol' shellback. I offen seen that girl beat her brother up to the royal yards in a race.

"When the coal tar, or wotever it was I'd been painted with, wore off—"

"Painted with! Wore off! What the hell are you talking about?" broke in Mr. Butts.

A look of pained surprise came over Kelly's face. "You don't suppose I shipped in that ol' blubber hunter, do you? No, sir. That boardin' house master had a chance to ship four Kanakas or other black-a-more whale men, an' when I comes too, after a night's drift in that boardin' house, I didn't know myself. When me head quits sailin' round in circles, aft I goes to the mate to spin me little yarn.

"'Wot is it, Manuel?' says he, edgin' over to the weather rail.

"'Me name's not Manuel,' says I. 'It's Kelly,' says I, 'John Kelly.'

"'That's all right,' says the mate, 'John Kelly, in Irish, is the same as Manuel Gonzales, in Portugee. Git for'rd now!' An' his hand fell easy-like on a loose belayin' pin, that held a couple of bights of the weather to'gallant buntline.

"Well, as I was sayin', when I shed that black an' tan skin, the afterguard took notice, specially the kids. We soon got to be great friends, an' many a piece of duff an' pie was smuggled out to me from the cabin. We lost an' won back every thing we had, several times, playin' poker. Them as didn't win, recooperated from the slop chest.

"Kate an' me commenced to get pretty thick. She was a clipper to look at, an' as good as she was handsome. The Ol' Man must have got suspicious, for as we was heavin' up anchor one day in Ponape, where we'd gone for water, I was called aft. An ol' Ponape chief's canoe was alongside. 'Here, Jack,' says the Ol' Man, 'get down in that canoe, an' see w'ot the ol' pirate's got stowed away under that pile of dungaree.'

"'Aye, aye, sir,' says I, an' jumped in.

"Well, sir, I was no sooner in that canoe than those bloomin' black-a-mores shoved clear, an' commenced paddlin' for the beach like 'ell bent. The sudden start of the canoe set me down by the run. I scrambled up, meanin' to jump overboard an' swim for the ship, when one of them smoked Irishmen hits me over the head with a paddle, an' I lays stunned like for a while. I comes to as we rounds a little point of land, an' sees the ship standin' off shore, all sails made, an' Kate herself standin' up in the mizzen riggin', wavin' her hat to me. I feels like the original orphan, till I sees the chief eyein' me hungry like.

"He seems to be figgerin' out how I would go best, fried, boiled, or on the half shell. But wot he says,

was, to cheer me up like, 'Bime-by me catch him plenty more mujeres.'

"I lives fine on breadfruit an' yams for a couple of weeks, when another whaler drops into the harbor. I goes off aboard her in a canoe. It's the *Cape Horn Pidgeon,* fifty-eight days from San Francisco. She wants water an' men, too.

"The skipper was a good fellow to talk to. He says it was so common for a whale ship to scatter her crew round the islands, he'd have to believe me. 'But,' says he, 'if you desert this packet, you'll have to swim for it. I never had no use for beach combers, but if you can pull an oar, I'll sign you on at a hundred an' sixtieth lay.' "

"What's that?" inquired Mr. Butts. "You mean you got paid off with a hundred and sixty whales?"

Shovelnose, interrupted in his discourse, with slow deliberation removed the bulk of the Perfecto he was chewing, and stowed it carefully under his cap which he then replaced on his head. An inquisitive cockroach, cruising along the wall of his cell, offered a fair target for the last of the tobacco juice.

"A hundred and sixty whales?" Kelly's voice was sarcastic. "Oh, yes, an' we packs 'em in little tin boxes like sardines. Blime me, but you merchant marine mates is wise ones. No, sir, it's this way. If we was lucky enough to get one hundred and sixty barrels of oil, I'd get one barrel. I mean, the boardin' house master would get it in advance money before I goes aboard."

"I see," remarked Mr. Butts, "it's clear as bilge water. Go ahead."

"Where was we?" inquired Kelly. "Oh, yes, aboard the ol' *Pidgeon.* Well, I thanks the Ol' Man, an' as he'd just got aboard a hundred dollars' worth of fruit and yams, for about ten dollars' worth of tobacco an'

"I Knew I Was Better Off
Than Jonah. He Was in the Steerage, You
Might Say, While I Had the Cabin
'Tween Decks"

beads, I takes advantage of his good humor, an' gets a new outfit out of the slop chest. We heads away to the nor'ward, an' west'ard, callin' in at the Mariannas for a few days, then up the Japan coast, to about thirty-seven degrees north latitude, which we calls the slaughter grounds.

"We was rollin' along under easy sail one mornin' when the fourth mate in the crow's nest sings out, 'Blow—ow—there goes flukes! Blo—ow!' All hands was on deck in no time. The skipper makes a meggyfone out o' his hands an' yells, 'Where away?'

"From the crow's nest comes down, 'Two points on the lee bow, sir, a school of sperm about three miles off.'

"The Ol' Man tells the man at the wheel to keep her off a couple of points, an' hustles up into the crow's nest himself. We clews up the kites fore an' mainsails, brings 'er up on the wind again, an' backs the mainyard, the skipper singin' out his orders from aloft. As she loses headway, three boats is lowered, an' away we goes after them bloomin' whales. I was pullin' bow oar in the mate's boat, makin' a good job of it, too, for a greenhorn, when I catches a crab with my oar, splashin' considerable water on the mate an' the rest of the boat's crew. Lucky for me, the mate couldn't let go of the steerin' oar. He couldn't holler at me for fear of scarin' the whale, but I could tell the way his mouth worked, every different kind of name he was callin' me.

"I had no sooner got in stroke again when the boat steerer heaves his harpoon at the whale. At the same time the mate yells, 'Pull three, back two!' an' helps heave the boat round with his long steerin' oar. We sheers clear, an' lays on our oars for a while to see what Flukes'd do next. He tried to feel around for the boat with his tail, gentle like. When he couldn't

coax it within reach, he tried to put a couple of figger-of-eight knots in himself. He could make 'em, too, but they wouldn't stay tied, no more'n a clockspring.

"Durin' all this gymnastic business, the boat steerer uses him for a target with bombs from his shoulder gun. All at once Flukes decides to go under. The line runs out so fast over the bow that we pours water over it to keep it from burnin' the wooden chock. After soundin' about half a tub of line, he comes to the surface again, an' starts away from the ship dead to wind'rd. The mate holds the line with a turn round the loggerhead aft. We gets our oars in, an' sits watchin' the gulls tryin' to overhaul us, an' give up.

"That boat was out of water half her length for'rd, while her stern rail was three feet below the surface, but we was travellin' so fast the water couldn't run inboard. We just ran from under it. We keeps up this speed for twenty minutes, then runs into a dense fog. Thick as mush that fog was—couldn't see fifty feet ahead of us.

"Then the strain came off the line, an' we started haulin' it in, so as to get close enough for another shot. We strains our eyes to get another glimpse of the whale through the fog. As the slack line comin' in nearly fills the tub, as it's coiled down snug an' clear, we knows we was gettin' in close quarters, though we still could see nothing of him. Then things happened. A huge black mass reared out of the water an' came down across the boat. It was his last kick. Me? I just leans over the gunwale an' was in the water before the whale hits the boat. The others was too scared to move.

"Quick as I was, I gets foul of some wreckage an' sees about a million stars as I'm goin' down. Natcherly, I starts in tryin' to get to the surface an' soon

arrives, nine-tenths full of salt water, other tenth teeth and blood. My nose feels like the ace of spades looks, an' my throat is scratched from swallerin' broken teeth. Otherwise, I'm all right. All round me is the wreckage of the boat an' her gear, an' the battered remains of six men I counted. I was the only one alive. Close to, was the dead whale, his long glistenin' body risin' an' fallin' to the swell. There was no wind, an' the fog seemed thick enough to chew.

"I tell you, it looked like Davy Jones' locker was yawnin' for little Willie. The only thing big enough to float me was the whale, so I paddles over to his tail an' tries to climb aboard. Lucky for me, my sheath knife's still with me or I never could have made it. I cut notches in his blubber, so as to get hand-an'-toe hold, an' after a good many slides, lands on top. Talk about greased poles,—they was easy longside that whale's tail.

"Well, when I gets me wind, I starts coonin' it on me hands an' knees up an' along his back to about midships, where he has the most beam. There the motion is less, an' unless it came on to blow, was above the wash of the seas. I cuts out a piece of blubber about two feet square, bigger on the surface than next the meat, so's it wouldn't fall inboard, to use as a hatch cover. Then I starts to carve out a hole big enough for shelter. I cuts down quite a ways, when I sees the water keg from the smashed whale boat alongside. That reminds me I better save all I can from the wreckage. So I cuts a few steps down to the water line, an' drops in the water. I hists all the gear I can find aboard the whale, drivin' a couple of broken oar handles in the blubber, to lash it to.

"A tin box of hardtack an' the water beaker goes down in the cabin. The boat's mast is gone, but I finds the two pieces an' the sail."

"Did you ever hear of Baron Munchaussen?" broke in Mr. Butts.

"Hear of him?" exclaimed Shovelnose, "I was shipmates with him one trip round the Horn from Hamburg, in the ol' *Glory of the Seas*. He was third mate of her. Why?"

"Oh, nothing much. I was just wondering if you were familiar with him. I'm going to stretch out in my bunk. On with the tale of the whale." Suiting the action to the word, Mr. Butts lay down on the iron bed the gaol provided.

"Well, sir," resumed Kelly, "when I gets all that work done, I turns in an' has a good night's rest. Next morning the fog is gone, an' a light easterly wind blowin'. No ship in sight. Bein' hungry, I sets fire to a small chunk of blubber, an' broils a piece of whale meat. It tastes mighty fine with the hardtack. After breakfast, I gets the two pieces of mast lashed together, an' uses the for'rd blow hole for a mast step. With the sails set an' drawin', the whale's head slowly pays off before the wind, an' I sets a course for the Japan coast, aimin' to make Nagasaki, if the wind holds fair.

"Then I turns to, an' digs out more whale for livin' quarters. The smoke of burnt blubber is so bad that I tunnels for'rd an' connects with the after blow hole, so I has a good draught to take the smoke away. The weather keeps fair for a couple of weeks, with nothing to do but eat an' sleep. But the wind hauls into the west'rd an' stays there, so I don't make much headway. I makes a piece of whale line fast to each fluke of his tail, an' manages to steer pretty well."

"You made a wheel out of whalebone for tiller ropes, I suppose?" suggested Mr. Butts.

Kelly, interrupted in his discourse, lifted his cap and felt round the top of his head till he located

the tobacco, the while bestowing a reproachful look on Butts. "Looky here, sir, are you spinnin' this yarn, or me? If you are, go ahead, an' I'll listen like a gentleman. Just now, this is like an Irish parliament, everybody talkin' an' nobody listenin'."

"All right, Kelly," apologized Mr. Butts, "no offense meant. I only wanted to jog your memory as to the little details."

Kelly, mollified by the apology, and the soothing effect of the twice-chewed quid, resumed: "I tell you wot I did do. I carved Kate's name in big letters, 'Kate Clewline,' an' right under it *'Boston,'* in the blubber on both sides of the whale's head. You see, the ship was named after Kate's mother, an' she had the same name. My craft looked more shipshape, havin' a name on it.

"One night the sky looks bad. Overcast, with low clouds scuddin' from the northwest, an' the ship an' sea increasin' every minute. I puts a double reef in the mainsail, an' lashes the tail down hard. As the seas start to roll aboard, I puts the hatch down, an' turns in for the night. Talk about your submarines—we was under water half the time! I had to turn out about eight bells in the first watch, an' plug up the blow hole I was usin' for a galley smoke stack, the water was comin' in so fast.

"The wind lets go next morning, so I shakes the reef out of the sail, an' sets it. As she gathers way on her I tries to steer, but the bloomin' tail had froze stiff durin' the night, an' I couldn't move it. Of all the blasted luck, that was the worst of the whole voyage. There I was, with my helm hard-a-starboard, sailin' circles round the Pacific Ocean, like a puppy dog chasin' his tail."

"Why didn't you cut it off?" asked Mr. Butts, his face betraying no sign of unbelief.

"I tried to," answered Kelly, "I was away aft cuttin' at that tail, workin' in water up to me neck at times, when a most amazin' thing happened. All at once a big chunk of ambergris comes to the surface right under me hand; then more of it, till I has enough to keep me ashore the rest of me life. Just think of me sailin' a gold mine all that time, an' not knowin' it!

"I was so busy spendin' that money that I forgets to eat for two whole days. I buys an' outfits a ship for Kate's ol' man, an' a pile of joolery for Kate herself. It took a long time to decide on the kind of horse I wanted to ride. First I wanted a white one, then a red one seemed best suited for a man with lots of money."

"Seems to me the salt horse you eat aboard ship would have satisfied you about that time," remarked Mr. Butts.

"There you go interruptin' me again," said Kelly. "If you don't put a stopper on that jaw tackle of yours, I never will get through this yarn. It was hunger that made me quit spendin' that money. After eatin' an imaginary dinner of pea soup, chicken, an' plum duff with lots of rum in the sauce, I turns to, an' eats a slice of raw whalemeat. It's nice an' tender by this time, but me hardtack is all scoffed, an' matches gone.

"That night a strong westerly squall comes along, an' away goes me mast an' sail. They wasn't much use to me, as I couldn't steer, but they did give me the idea I was movin'.

"The loss of me sail seemed to take the spirit right out of me. Then I remembered the man who stayed three days in the belly of a whale, an' came out all right. I knew I was better off than Jonah. He was in the steerage, you might say, while I has a cabin

'tween decks. An' as for faith, I held faith like a wet sail would hold wind. I reasoned it out this way: Why was I bein' kept alive an' kickin' if I wasn't to be picked up by some ship? An' me with a fortune to spend, too!

"I was overhaulin' me past life, an' layin' down rules for the future when I hears the shoutin' of human voices, then a muffled report sounded near me, an' covered with minced whalemeat an' blubber, was nearly blowed out of me cabin. I gets me head out of the hatch, an' there, close to, was a whale boat. They was already fast to my whale, an' the boat steerer was aimin' his gun to shoot another bomb, when I lets a yell out o' me you could hear a mile.

"Down drops the gun, strikin' the hammer on the gun'ale of the boat, an' the bomb sings its way aloft clear of everything.

"That boat's crew was so astonished they couldn't talk. They just sits an' stares, their eyes poppin' out of their heads so far you could knock 'em off with sticks. I knew 'em right away. It was the mate an' his boat from the *Kate Clewline,* an' away to the wind'ard a couple of miles was the ol' packet herself, as natural as life, squarin' in her yards to run down an' pick up the mate's whale.

" 'Boat ahoy!' I yells. 'Wot ship are you from? Wot are you lubbers doin' fast to another man's whale? Cut loose, or I will for you.'

"An' then the mate found his voice, an' it was mighty nice an' homelike to hear him cuss. None of 'em seemed to know me, an' it was no wonder. I was plastered all over with a sort of pury of blubber an' whalemeat. When the mate had cussed himself out of breath, I says, callin' him by name, 'How's the ol' *Kate Clewline?* An' young Katie, is she still aboard?'

"'Well, damme for a deck swab, if it ain't Manuel!' says he. An' he thumps his leg with his fists, an' holds his sides while he laughs.

"'No, sir,' says I, 'not Manuel. Kelly,' says I, 'John Kelly.' An' he laughs some more.

"Well, I passes me fortune in the boat an' gets aboard. The ol' ship sails by us an' heaves to, just to leeward. So we're soon alongside, cuttin' wot blubber there's left off that carcass. Of course nothin' was too good for me after they got a sight of that ambergris."

"I suppose Kate fell on your manly bosom, an' wept tears of joy?" asked Mr. Butts.

"No tears of joy was sprung," Shovelnose yawned sleepily. "Kate an' her mother had landed at Nagasaki, an' took the steamer home."

"Of course you bought government bonds with your money," ventured Mr. Butts again.

"Bonds nothin'!" said Kelly, "I chartered the 'Fair Wind' saloon for twenty-four hours, an' kept open house."

THE MOTHER

SARAH THURSTON NOTT

THE MOTHER

WIDE and low, with its deep porches overhung with honeysuckle vines, its lawns dotted with china-ball trees, Hamilton Hall drowsed after the summer's heat. Coupled with a woman's quieter mirth childish laughter came from somewhere out of view. Over the kitchen behind "de big house" smoke hung in a lazy cloud, and through the open door Mammy's song rose and fell with wailing sweetness.

A negro, powerfully built, and with an old-fashioned gun held carelessly in the bend of his arm, emerged from the woods and struck through the clearing. Half across the distance he stopped and sniffed the air.

"Cawn-braid an' greens," he concluded.

Circling past the barnyard, where the hens were preparing to roost, he followed the path to the kitchen. He laid his gun on the porch, and mounting the steps, leaned in the doorway listening to the inviting rap of the kettle top over the boiling greens.

His mother's back was toward him. She was an old woman, gaunt and gray as a swamp cypress. She spoke abruptly:

"Run 'way lil' Miss Margaret, no mo' stories dis evenin'."

His answering chuckle brought her striding toward him.

"Yo' suh, Jeff," she demanded, "how come yo' hyah? Ain't de mill got work fo' one mo' lazy niggah?"

Jeff shifted his weight for answer.

"Aw, Mammy," he coaxed, "Mr. Will he ain't gwine want all dat's in dat kittle; gib me some greens. I'm hongry."

"Hongry! What time o' day is it dat yo' ain't hongry? Git yo'sef out o' dis kitchen." She raised a threatening arm but, without striking, let it descend to rest akimbo on her hip while a torrent of motherly epithets rained on his head, as with good-natured insolence he leaned past her to a shelf, and helped himself to a square of corn bread.

As he took a seat on the edge of the porch, his feet swinging clear of the ground, he moved uneasily; without glancing up he knew that she had followed him from the kitchen and had seen the gun. It was hers and a part of her old plantation life. She came close behind him. But before she could speak a shout made them both turn. Around the house Baby William dashed with his mother in close pursuit. The little fellow fled straight to the man, and jumping up and down in his excitement, pounded the negro's shins with his small fists.

"My mother was perfectly a-termined to catch me!"

"Careful! Careful, William!" Mrs. Hamilton warned, as laughing and panting, she dropped to a seat on the steps. A moment later brown-eyed Margaret followed, smiling shyly, and seated herself beside her mother.

"Ca'ful!" repeated Mammy with unnecessary vehemence. "Fo' de lan's sake, Miss Sweetie, dat wouldn't cripple a mosquito. Des yo' go on, ma lamb, beat up his ole bones; dey ain't a lazier set in de kentry. Pull him off de gallery, honey! Ain't I done tole him Miss Sweetie ain't gwine hab no good fo' nothin' niggah clutterin' up dis hyah po'ch?"

Jeff, apparently unmoved by the tirade, was smiling good-naturedly at the child. And as though seeing

the man for the first time, Mrs. Hamilton studied his half averted face,—the heavy jaw, the sloping forehead, the deep-set eyes that peered from beneath shelving brows. Instinctively her arm went out and encircled her little daughter.

Conscious of her scrutiny, the man moved. Then gently putting Baby William aside, he took his gun and slid from the porch. As he went with easy swing across the fields, the children wandered away to their play, and Mammy returned to the kitchen. But long after he had become a part of the forest mystery, Mrs. Hamilton still lingered on the steps watching the sunset colors deepen behind the pines that rose high without limb.

It was Indian summer; the time of dreamy days and cool evenings. Out of the yellowing hickory and ironwood along the creek, sumac blazed, and all day, mist in horizontal wisps had hung in the clearing.

A gun-shot's rolling echo from the north finally brought Mammy to the door.

"Jeff's shot a rabbit, I reckon."

"That was from the Thompson clearing. Jeff went——" and Mrs. Hamilton pointed to the west.

Mammy laughed tolerantly. "I knows de soun' o' dat gun, chile, like yo' knows de soun' o' Mr. Will's voice."

She had stepped out upon the porch,—a gaunt figure, a little stooped, yet a figure from which age had not yet taken its look of sinuous strength. One hand was on her hip. Her head was lifted in the listening attitude of a forest creature. Had Mrs. Hamilton glanced at her then she would not have spoken.

"How you can let that young giant come home and live on you whenever he pleases is more than I can understand," she said with bitterness.

The silence behind her made her glance over her shoulder. The old nurse was still standing with uplifted chin, but her eyes were lowered. The look in them, and the half smile on her lips sent a delicate flush to the younger woman's face.

"Yo's a mammy, honey," she was reminded.

Darkness came quickly, and with it the frog chorus from the creek. Mr. Hamilton had not returned from the village by the children's bedtime. Mammy built a fire in the comfortable hall and, leaving her mistress in her low chair before the hearth, coaxed the children up the stairs to the nursery.

Wheels finally rumbled over the culvert, and by the way in which the sagging gate was wrenched open Mrs. Hamilton knew that her husband was troubled. She went slowly down the hall to meet him. He entered quickly. Every line of his face was drawn, his lips were stern with repression. In his eyes was the look that had made him a leader in the community.

He addressed her with the calm of tension, issuing orders as to a man. She moved swiftly to darken the wide hall. A tragedy had been committed. One even greater threatened. It was not until he had started to go again that the sight of the fear chilling through her reminded him that she was a woman. He took her in his arms.

"Don't tremble so, little sweetheart, Mammy will be here with you."

But she released herself from his grasp.

"You are going—with them?"

His gaze met hers unflinchingly.

"The town is aroused. The better element must take a hand now, or——" A gesture completed his sentence.

Without a word she watched him pass through the outer door. When the gate had twice creaked she

groped her way up the stairs to the nursery. The place was mellow with a soft light. Margaret in her little night-dress sat tailor-fashion on the rug, laughing at Baby William who wobbled like a clumsy polar bear across the bed. With eyes that saw nothing Mrs. Hamilton gazed at the picture till Mammy's sharp reprimand roused her.

"What yo' doin' hyah dis time o' evenin', Miss Sweetie? Don' yo' know I'se puttin' dese hyah babies to bed?"

Rough hands thrust her into a chair away from the light as Mammy whispered: "Set dar, ma lamb! Yo' po' white face done skeer Margaret a-ready. Margaret," she scolded, sharply turning again to the children, "what yo' doin' out o' dat bed! Git back befo' I gits behind yo'! Now, Miss Sweetie, yo' sing while I holds dis baby's eyes shet. No playin' 'possum, now, yo's sho gwine sleep." And to hide the tremble in the mother's voice, the old nurse joined in the lullaby. Later the two women softly left the room and passed down the stairs. They tiptoed across the hall, then coaxing her mistress to a chair, Mammy held the lady's small, cold hands to the blaze.

"Who's been skeerin' ma angel?" she chided.

"Mr. Will came home. He's gone again. Little Ollie Thompson has been murdered. They've sent for hounds."

"Hab mercy, Lowd!"

The words were half a prayer, half an acceptance of the inevitable. Mammy stared into the coals.

Impelled by the horror of what had been told her, Mrs. Hamilton hurried on: "They found her near the branch. She hadn't been dead long. He had shot her afterward."

The hand over hers tightened suddenly. Then came the low demand: "What time was dat?"

With a new horror upon her, she looked at the gaunt old negress. The other's gaze wrested the truth from her.

"About—dusk," she whispered, almost inaudibly, then sat mute. Race divided them.

The stairs creaked, and out of the shadows Margaret stole forward, her eyes wide with a dread the understanding of which time alone could help her fathom. Her mother held out her arm. Margaret crouched against her.

"Little—woman," the mother pityingly whispered, and again there was silence.

Time passed. Then came a sound—low and blood-congealing. Margaret started up.

"What's that?" she demanded. Her eyes leaped from her mother's face to Mammy's. The old negress had not moved.

"Hounds," Mammy answered.

The cries came nearer; swept away to the north; grew less; broke with renewed vigor, and finally ceased. With every sense in their bodies strained to the one faculty of hearing, they waited.

At midnight Mr. Hamilton rode in at the gate. His wife sprang to open the door. He stepped in and stood aside. His breath came heavily. Mammy, also, had risen. Her eyes commanded his. A moment they stood thus, the hall's width between them. Then she swayed, slowly, like a great pine.

"At de stake?" she faltered. Her face had grown very old, and her body looked without strength.

"No, by God, we saved him that!"

Again she swayed. As she straightened two generations of civilization had swept from her; she was a jungle-mother.

"Whar's he at?"

Through the hall the words rang fiercely.

"In the savannah behind Thompson's."

"Hangin'?"

"Hanging." With a groan Mr. Hamilton pushed his wife toward the old nurse who had brushed Margaret aside and was stalking past them to the porch. "Go to her!"

Mrs. Hamilton followed. When she had reached the steps Mammy was already half across the lawn, moving past the trees that curved in dark arcs against the sky; beyond her the forest rose, a solid barrier. The lady ran to her, and they clung to each other; the one powerless to comfort; the other numbed beyond ability to comprehend her own suffering. A moment only the old head bowed upon the younger woman's shoulder. Then the negress thrust her roughly from her. Mrs. Hamilton groped after her.

"Mammy—Mammy," she sobbed. "Where are you going?"

The gaunt old mother strode away as though she had not heard, then she turned, and in the clear darkness stretched her long, lean arms toward the heavens.

"He's mine!" she flung in defiance. "I'se gwine cut him down!"

THE GREATEST OF THESE

Copyright, Metropolitan, 1904

AGNES MORLEY CLEAVELAND

THE GREATEST OF THESE

Two fellows can hang together fer a lifetime. It ain't often they do; but they *can*. Three can't.

By way of emphasis, Alasan spat into the fire with splendid precision.

Goodlet threw a piñon knot on the coals, and watched it burst into a blaze.

"Ye know Ross Delaney and Randy Forbes, don't ye?" he asked, after a silence during which the fire made lights and shadows on the weather-beaten faces of the two men.

Alasan assented. "At the old Lausen place—yep. Them's two 'at's hung together ever since I've knowed 'em."

"Never knowed Dan English, did ye? He was gone before ye came. Them three, Dan an' Randy an' Ross, was a case like ye're talkin' about. Dan an' Randy was together fust. I recollect the day Ross Delaney hit the country," Goodlet continued, pulling his hat low over his eyes.

"He was the dudiest little outfit ye ever seen; had on a hat about as big as a two-bit piece, and a bald-faced shirt. He'd brought his sister out here for her health. She was a terrible sickly little girl; had eyes as big as my fist; and her face was plumb white. She orter been out here a year before she come, for even New Mexico can't raise the dead. Ross bought the Lausen place and fixed it up, and they lived there till she died. Their folks wanted him to bring her back East, but she had said she wanted to be buried under that big pine tree side o' the house, so he buried her there.

"It was while she was sick that Randy an' Dan first got acquainted with him. They was a-batchin' it at the LS ranch, an' bein' the nearest neighbors, they went over and done what they could, which warn't much, fer they was a woman a-nursin' her; but she seemed to be mighty obliged to the boys fer comin' an' 'peared to like 'em. Dan'd tell her how he brought cattle off'n Techau Mesa, an' how he'd caught wild horses, an' about the old Injun ruins an' the pictures on the bluffs over on the Alamosa, an' the *Mal Pais* plains, and the Salt Lake an' all that sort o' thing. She liked to hear him tell it, and'd keep him talkin' half a day at a time. When she died, them three—Ross, Randy an' Dan—they carried her over to the tree an' buried her; an' after that it seemed like nothin' could come between them boys. Ross went over to the LS ranch and stayed with the other two. Seemed like he didn't want to quit the country an' leave the little girl alone under the tree; an' the more he stayed the more he didn't want to go, anyway. He went back East once, but couldn't stand it mor'n ten days—cow-punchers never can—an' when he come back he brought all his money with him an' went in the cow business. He taken the other two in pardners with him, though all the capital they had was a horse an' saddle an' brandin' iron apiece. They never had saved nuthin'—cow-punchers never does. Dan got loaded most every time he went to town; but he was sure a good-hearted boy; and when he was on the ranch the' warn't a better feller in these hills. He knowed more about a cow'n she knowed about herself. He could ride anything that wore hair an' walked on four feet; an' he never got bowed up—I never seen him mad.

"Randy was steadier; but he'd get on the push pretty easy. I was at the ranch one time when Ross

"Randy and Ross Read the Letter
From Dan . . . He Jest Said He'd Allus
Meant to Keep His Word an' Send Paint
Back, But He'd Had a Hard Time
Dodgin' the Officers"

had cooked supper. He wasn't much on the cook, but he'd learned to fry a piece o' meat an' boil a pot o' coffee. They had a tenderfoot there 'at said he was a cattle-buyer. When they'd set down to supper, the tenderfoot cast his optics over the lay, an' says: 'Please pass the charred remains of the beefsteak.' In about two seconds there come mighty near bein' the mangled remains of a tenderfoot passed into the yard. Randy like to 'a' kilt the poor fool, jest 'cause he thought he was guyin' Ross's cookin'. He wouldn't 'a' done nothin' but cussed him up a batch if it'd been his *own* cookin'. Anyhow, Randy'd got down on the feller fer offerin' him twenty dollars for his pinto pony. He'd paid forty fer the horse, and wouldn't 'a' sold him fer a hundred; an' when he told the tenderfoot to go to, the tenderfoot he said he could buy a carload of horses as good as that fer a hundred—which showed him to be part fool as well as a impolite jackrabbit, fer they warn't as good a horse as Paint in the territory, an' not a carload in the United States. That horse'd made Randy's livin' fer him fer two years. When the TZs were gatherin' cattle to ship, they give Randy ten dollars fer every wild steer o' theirn 'at he'd bring in. Old Paint'd bring a ten-year-old horn off'n Blue Mesa every time, an' handle it, too, when Randy got it roped. He had the longest wind an' the most sense in the brush, o' any horse I ever seen. He'd go where the steer'd go; an' if Randy could come along too, all right; that was Randy's lookout. Next to the two other fellows, Randy set more store by that horse'n anythin' else in this world; so, when that there eastern lay with a prickly-pear fer a head offered him twenty dollars fer Paint, Randy sized him up to be what he was.

"Ross didn't take no stock in the tenderfoot, either; but Dan jest laughed, and treated him like he allus treated folks, real civil. The feller kept hangin' around

the ranch, gittin' more an' more amigo with Dan. Then, one day, Dan told the boys 'at the feller'd offered him a good thing if he'd go in with him on a cattle deal; said that they could make a stake. The tenderfoot said he was 'in touch with capital'—he called it—which I reckon meant he had a haul on some feller's pocketbook. Dan was to do the buyin', on a big commission; an' the first thing the tenderfoot done was to advance 'im a hundred dollars fer 'personal expenses.' The other boys told 'im he was plum locoed, an' give 'im a side talk to git 'im out o' the notion; but he jest laughed, an' kept on.

"The day him an' the tenderfoot left the ranch together, Randy went to him an' said: 'If ye git in a jackpot, we'll help ye out; but we think ye're the biggest fool in the territory.' Ross told him they'd keep his interest in the partnership fer him, so's if things didn't pan out as he expected, he could come back. They was both sorter knocked out about his goin'. Seemed like he'd been terrible willin' to cut out from them an' throw in with a stranger; but they didn't say much. They jest taken care o' his horses an' kept on feedin' 'em, so's they'd be in good shape when he come back.

"About a week after that, Ross was makin' a circle out by the White Lake, an' he jest happened to meet up with Windy Liggit, on his way to the Gila.

" 'I hear you fellers have sold out,' Windy says.

" 'You'd better hear again,' says Ross. 'This cattle business is too good a thing to sell out of.'

" 'Well, there's somethin' queer about it, then,' Windy says. 'I was in Lawyer Todd's office yesterday, an' that there tenderfoot an' Dan was in there. Dan signed a paper an' says: "All right, them LS cattle belong to you." He got a pretty big load on before night, an' was prisin' it up when I left town.'

"Ross never said nothin'; but jest lit out fer the ranch. He come in on a keen, slantin' gallop, an' told Randy what Windy'd told him. Randy was sure wringey; wanted to go straight off an' shoot that tenderfoot up. Ross 'lowed they'd better go to town next day an' see how things was, they got 'em up a horse apiece from the pasture, an' put 'em in the corral where they'd be handy in the mornin.'

"That night they set in front o' the fire till pretty late, talkin' about how they'd been compadres for three year, an' how they'd got acquainted, an' Ross got to talkin' about the little girl (which was what he hardly ever done) an' how she uster like to hear Dan tell her his yarns. They heerd a noise outside, an' before they could jump up Dan hisself come rushin' in. His eyes was bloodshot an' his fingers twitched. 'Fer God's sake, fellers!' he says, 'Give me a good horse. I've shot a man, an' I got to drag it.'

" 'How'd ye do it?' they asked.

" 'I was drinkin'; an' the constable tried to take my gun away from me. I warn't doin' nothin' with it; but he hit me on the head, an' I shot him. Don't know whether I got 'im or not; but I must drag it out o' this country.'

"Randy was up an' had his hat on. 'Paint's in the corral,' says he. 'They never can ketch you on *Paint.*'

" 'Got plenty o' money?' says Ross, without lookin' at 'im; an' Dan says 'Yes,' without lookin', either. 'I'll get Paint back to you some day,' he says, jumpin' in the saddle.

" 'Take good care o' yourself,' the boys hollered, as he rode off in the dark.

" 'We got to git his horse away from here,' says Randy, as soon as Dan was gone.

" 'Let's go over to the old place,' says Ross. 'I don't want to talk to no sheriff's posse.' So they took Dan's

give-out horse an went over to the old Lausen place—an' Ross went an' set under the tree by the little girl.

"Next day, when they went home, they seen where the posse'd been there, but, findin' nobody at the place, had went on. Windy had told 'em the truth. The lawyer said Dan had given the tenderfoot a deed to all the LS cattle an' horses. The tenderfoot had lit out, too, which warn't a bad idea on his part. He got back in Chicago an' made it hot fer the boys. They didn't have nothin' to fight a lawsuit with, an' 'twasn't likely they could 'a' beat it, anyhow. The tenderfoot served an injunction on 'em ag'in handlin' the cattle tell he proved 'at he giv Dan a draft fer five thousand dollars. He told 'em their business was with Dan.

"They was nothin' fer them to do but to go to workin' fer wages. They both got a job o' cow-punchin' with the Red Hill comp'ny; an' they never spoke Dan's name. But they wouldn't listen to nobody else give 'im down country. If the boys ever got to talkin' about horses, Randy'd quit the crowd. Seemed like he didn't want to think about Paint. When a steer'd git away from 'im, or he couldn't make a horse set back on the rope, he'd have the blues fer a whole day; an' us fellers knew he was grievin' fer Paint."

The camp fire was burning low, and Alasan threw another piñon chunk on the coals. When it had blazed up, the other resumed:

"Dan'd been gone fer three years; the boys had made 'em a little stake, an' got another bunch o' their own, an' was batchin' it in the old Lausen place. One night towards dark, a man on a mighty poor, give-out horse, come a-ridin' up to the house. Randy went out and, though it was pretty near plumb dark, he knowed the horse. 'Where'd ye git that horse?' he yelled, an' had the saddle an' bridle off'n Paint, an' was rubbin' him all over, before he found out that the feller was

a Mexican, an' mighty near scared to death, fer he couldn't understand a word that was said. But he give Randy a dirty, rumpled-up letter he'd been carryin' in his pocket, an' after Randy'd taken Paint an' fed 'im as much corn as he dared—fer the horse didn't look like he'd been used to any lately—he went in the house an' him an' Ross read the letter.

"It was from Dan, an' jest said he'd allus meant to keep his word an' send Paint back; but he'd had a hard time dodgin' the officers, an' fer a long time he never knew what became o' Paint; but he'd come back to where he'd left 'im, and hunted 'im up, and was sending' 'im back by a Mexican. He said his own health was tol'able poor, an' he b'lieved it wouldn't be long tell he was planted; an' he hoped the boys was a-doin' well. He wound up by sayin': 'I wisht one o' you had put a bullet through me, 'stead o' lettin' me go to town with that man.'

"The boys set still fer a long time after they'd read the letter. The Mexican was gittin' on the outside of a pot o' beans, an' wouldn't 'a' heard what they said, if he could 'a' understood.

"'I knowed it was the tenderfoot,' says Randy, pretty soon.

"Ross didn't speak for a while. Then he sorter drawed in his breath an' whispered: 'He says his health's bad. I wonder who's takin' care of him?'

"'It'd be safe fer him to come back now,' Randy says, without answerin'. 'That constable's done got well; an' besides, he's on the dodge hisself, and wouldn't never show up to prosecute Dan.' Randy could talk a little Mexican, an' he turned, sudden, an' asked the feller who brought the letter if he could get an answer back to Dan. The Mexican '*pienso-ed que si,*' an' Ross set down an wrote on one side of a sheet o' paper: 'Come back, old feller; it is safe now.'

"Dan come, in about a month. The boys hardly knowed 'im. It was all he could do to git from his horse to the house. He went right to bed then, an' fer a week he never said much, but jest follered the boys with his eyes when they was in the room. One day he seemed pearter and wanted to talk.

" 'How's business?' he says.

" 'Tol'able,' says Randy, feelin' uneasy.

" 'Sell many steers this fall?'

"Randy looked at him curious-like.

" 'Nope,' was all he said.

" 'Many calves?' asked Dan.

" 'Jest a few,' says Randy.

"Dan laid lookin' at the ceilin' fer a long time; then he says, sorter slow-like; 'I hadn't orter sold my interest to that feller. It warn't right, 'thout lettin' you fellers know. I was drunk, I guess.' Randy looked at Ross hard, but neither of 'em said nothin'.

" 'How much did ye sell out fer?' Ross asks, after a minute.

" 'I sold one-third fer a thousand dollars—jest the cattle—not the ranches or horses. I'm sure sorry I done it, too. I never got a cent. I can't recollect jest what did happen. I give him a paper, an' he give me one; an' then he taken his back ag'in. Then I got in that row, an' that's all I know about it. I hope it never made you fellers any trouble.' It seemed like he couldn't hardly say so much. The boys looked at each other ag'in.

" 'It—ain't—never—made us any trouble,' says Ross, real slow.

" 'I sure hate it 'bout old Paint bein' in such bad shape,' Dan says, though he was pretty short on wind.

" 'I allus meant to turn 'im out fer the rest of 'is life, anyhow,' says Randy. 'He's all right.'

"It was pretty near mornin' before Dan says any more. Both the other boys was up. They sorter 'lowed he might lay 'em down before daylight. Dan moved in bed, an' the boys come up alongside. 'Want anythin'?' says Randy, real cheerful, though he was tol'able bad scared.

" 'Y'ye mind—puttin' me—under the—tree—where—where the little girl is?' He looked at Ross sorter's if he was afraid Ross wouldn't do it. Ross did sorter hesitate. That tree allus had b'longed to the little girl. Then he says, real quiet, 'We'll put you there, if you should happen to die before either of us.'

"The next day they put 'im there."

The last flame flickered and died. Against the blackness of the night two blacker figures were outlined, bending forward, across the smoldering embers. Neither spoke. The original proposition may not have been disproven, but Alasan did not resume the argument.

THE CORNER TABLE

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REBECCA N. PORTER

THE CORNER TABLE

FROM the dining room window Constance watched her husband's tall figure swing down the street. At the corner she saw him break into a run and pull himself up on the rear platform of a downtown car. The wave of desolation that she had been fighting off for days swept over her, deafening her to every sound save the voice that called to her from the outer world. Slowly she withdrew her gaze away from the window and let it wander around the room; to the table, with its confusion of soiled breakfast dishes; to the room beyond where a fresh fog from the bay drifted in through half-closed windows.

The swinging door at the end of the dining room was pushed open, and the maid entered with an empty tray. She began tumbling the dishes onto it, and, irritated at the clatter, Constance brushed aside the portieres of the front room. She drew up the shades with a sharp twitch, and the gray light fell on a great mass of violets upon the center table. She walked over and stood looking down on them. "Violets! For *me!*" she murmured, with a ghost of a laugh that jarred unpleasantly even on her own ears. She stooped over the bowl and began awkwardly to push some of the shorter stems down into the water. Then, slipping an ornamental duster from its case, she flicked it clumsily over the pictures on the wall.

The portieres parted again, and the maid, balancing the loaded tray on the palm of her hand, peered into the room.

"There's a pot of mush left over this morning. Will you have it fried for your lunch?"

The words seemed to snap in Constance a taut cord of suppression. She answered with sudden decision, "You may do whatever you like for lunch; I won't be at home."

Half an hour later she donned her short-skirted walking suit and left the house. It was still early; the downtown cars were crowded with San Francisco's workers on their way to office and store to take their parts in the drama of a city's day. Walking briskly, Constance signalled a passing car and sprang aboard. The awkwardness of a few moments ago had vanished, giving place to the perfect ease of one who feels herself on sure ground. A man moved aside and offered her his strap. "Kind of helps a little to hold to something steady," he said, with the easy good-comradeship that she knew so well.

She thanked him with a friendly nod, and thus encouraged, he ventured a question: "Say, didn't you used to be a reporter on the *Morning Record.*"

"Yes. Why?"

"I thought your face looked familiar. You used to drop around to our place sometimes. Madison's Detective Bureau. Remember?"

"Why, Mr. Madison! Of course I remember. You've given me a start on some mighty good stories. What are you doing up in our part of town so early?"

The man leaned closer and spoke in a low, confidential tone: "Since you're not on the *Record* any more, I don't mind telling you. There was a robbery at the Union Bank last night, and I'm running it down."

There was a moment of silence. Then he asked suddenly: "Why did you break with the *Record?* Get a better job?"

"I got something that I thought was going to be better, yes." The irony of her reply was lost upon

him, but he caught the note of discontent in her voice. "Didn't pan out, huh?" he said.

There *is* a sympathy that carries with it a hidden sting. This was the open fellow feeling that he would have offered to another man who was down on his luck, and it warmed her heart as nothing else could have done. She answered slowly.

"No, I'm afraid it hasn't panned out exactly, but it's too late to be thinking of that now."

"Don't you ever believe that," he said. "Since you left, the *Record* has had all kinds of bad luck with their reporters. The only one who seems to stand in at all is that Nickels girl. She's been there for years, you know, and they all pretty nearly swear by her."

At Powell Street, he dropped off the car, leaving Constance to ride down alone. As the car trundled along, she found herself musing about the Nickels girl. Yes, of course, Marion would stay with the *Record* and go on doing brilliant work there as always. She had been interested in Marion when they had worked together, and now that she herself was out of the field, her interest in all its workers seemed double-edged. Marion Nickels was the right sort; she had realized that. If only more people went into the work as this girl had, heart and soul, for sheer love of it! She felt herself grow rigid with contempt for those women who, for mere excitement or adventure, dabble in the world's work.

The meeting with Madison was like a breath of the old life. It fanned the smoldering fire within her into flame. Suddenly, from a mere purposeless going somewhere, her journey took definite direction. With the yearning for the old activities now grown clamorous, She resolved to go over some of the familiar rounds.

At the corner where Kearny Street slants into Market, she paused for a moment. The upgoing cars

swarmed with early commuters on their way to business. The out-bound cars were packed with book-laden students hurrying to the university across the bay. Constance, watching them, felt a keen pang of envy for them all. For a moment she stood, gazing far down the teeming thoroughfare to where the cars swung round the loop to the Ferry Building. Then she drew herself up sharply.

"I'll go down to lower Mission and wander about there for a while," she mused. "Then I'll come along up Third, and at noon—at noon I'll take lunch at Denny's."

Denny's! To be back there again where all the downtown newspaper people congregated for hasty lunches and the exchange of breezy greetings! She felt that the very sight of Denny's might ease the restless longing of her heart.

On Mission Street she swung briskly along past dingy shops whose owners lounged in the doorways. To many of these she gave a nod of friendly recognition. No one and nothing escaped her keen eyes.

On one of the shabby corners she came upon a small Italian boy howling with wrathful defiance as he gazed after the retreating figures of two larger boys. She stopped and turned him about gently.

"Now, my little man, what's the matter?"

"They won't let me go with 'em!" he wailed. "And they calls my brother a swipe."

"Where do you live?"

He pointed vaguely.

"H—m, I think I know." She had been sizing him up swiftly. "You look like one of Plingetto tribe. Isn't your father's name Joe Plingetto?"

He looked up at her in awed surprise, and slipped one hand into hers. On the way home she talked to him in a tone of frank good-comradeship that made him

feel like a grown-up man. He found himself talking too: telling her about his father's new store and his elder brother's most recent trip to the city jail.

"And he's allus been white to me, too," he confided regretfully. "And this time he's promised to buy me a coaster if he gets away with the pile."

When she had conducted him safely to his own door, and delivered a sharp word of warning to his mother, she walked briskly away, nodding to a staring policeman whom she encountered at the corner.

"I hear you've taken Val Plingetto again," she said, with easy informality. "It's getting to be an old story, isn't it?"

The man stared at her with a face devoid of all expression.

"Yes, but we only got hold of him an hour ago. You're some swift."

"What's the matter this time?"

"Pretty grave charge, if it's true. He broke into the Union Bank early this morning. Something queer about the business, too, but the story isn't cleared up yet."

There was a touch of irritation in his voice, and he had never stopped staring at her. But his experience with newspaper people had been sufficiently large and varied to keep him from asking her where she had gained her information. He contented himself by remarking casually, "No use going around to the jail. They won't let him see anybody."

"Oh, I don't care about interviewing him. I'm not on the *Record* any more, you know."

His face showed the first gleam of surprise, but she turned away without giving him a chance to question her.

The ferry clock pointed the noon hour when she found herself before the gilt-lettered door of Denny's

restaurant. Her own table over in the corner was vacant, and with a thrill of exultation she marched over and took possession. The head waiter, a little pointed-faced man, trailed after her, napkin and menu card under his arm. She felt that he approved of her; that she was the kind he liked to wait upon; that type, so rare among his women patrons, that knows what she wants before he pulls out her chair. She never subjected him to an embarrassing cross-examination of the bill of fare.

She gave him her order while she pulled off her gloves; then drank the glass of cold water beside her plate and let her eyes wander around the room. How familiar it all looked! Not a thing had been changed since the days, six months ago, when she had been used to hurry in for haphazard lunches. Even the side mirror, with its soap-written injunction, "Try Denny's Delight," seemed like the face of a friend. She pictured to herself the lunches eaten at leisure in the oak-finished dining room. The round table with its hemstiched covers and the inevitable mass of violets glowing in the center. The dreariness of it all made her shudder. How had she endured it! How would she endure it again tomorrow!

The grating of a chair opposite roused her. "You won't object if I eat my lunch with you, will you?"

Without raising her eyes Constance answered with the breezy cordiality of the business world: "Make yourself perfectly at home. This table doesn't *belong* to me, you know." Then, as she glanced for the first time at the newcomer, her eyes lighted with recognition, and she stretched a hand across the table. "Why, I didn't see who you were, girlie. It's good to meet someone from the *Record* again."

The girl took off her wrap and threw it over the back of the chair. Her face had drawn, worried lines,

and the heavy droop of her eyes confirmed the story of sleepless nights. Constance viewed her judicially.

"They've put you in on night work this year, Marion?"

The girl answered with an infinite weariness: "Oh, I've been going all the gaits these past two months. We're shy two men and—well, you know what that means."

The other nodded with reminiscent thoughtfulness. The pointed-faced waiter reappeared with her order, and began ranging the little dishes about her plate. When he had gone away, Marion Nickels leaned across the table and spoke in a low, confidential tone:

"I've been going steadily since eight o'clock this morning, and there is absolutely nothing to show for it. It's dead this time of year: nothing interests the public."

Constance fitted one empty potato skin into the other, and asked with abrupt irrelevancy: "Do you see much of Ned Stringham these days?"

The girl shot her a quick glance. Then she answered dully: "I don't see much of anybody. There's no time for social intercourse."

Constance smiled. "Do you know," she accused, "I really believe you are envying me, Marion."

The girl's face flushed. She began toying with the clumsy saltshaker beside her plate.

"You're envying me for being out of it all. Now, aren't you?"

"Yes, I do envy you with all my heart. I envy you for being 'out of it,' as you say, and—for other things."

"By the 'other things,' of course you mean a home," Constance explained. "Home, sweet home, with your foot on the soft pedal and a halo poised above your head."

"I'm tired," the girl went on, with a tragic little wave of her napkin. "I suppose you've forgotten what it feels like to be really tired. I've never had a chance to forget. Sometimes I wish I were the fainting kind of woman, and could faint dead away in the office. They're the only kind who get sympathy, and moments of complete relaxation."

The keen-eyed woman opposite nodded with ready understanding. "I know all about *that,*" she answered. "And there are lots of things we women will do when we get keyed up to that point. Some marry out of it."

She paused a moment, then went on in a calm, impersonal tone but with her eyes fixed on the girl across the table:

"Ned Stringham is one of San Francisco's big lawyers. He has a future before him, and anyone can see that he'd like to have you share it. It's all right to choose that way out if—well, if you're that kind of a woman. But if you're a hollyhock that has battled with the world all its life, if you've struggled and fought with it, until you've succeeded in wresting from it what you want—well, the loveliest home in the world and the most ideal husband, can never make—a violet of you."

Her voice had sharpened now, and there was a look in her half-closed eyes that Marion had never seen there before.

"Violets prefer to hide away under broad, protecting leaves," she went on; "and it's charming to see them do it. But if a hollyhock should try the same thing, you'd call it a freak. We can't change our temperaments with our names, and we make a fatal mistake when we try. Don't do that, Marion," she added suddenly. "A home looks like a haven to you now, but you're a world's woman."

The girl pushed her plate away, and stared down at the dingy tablecloth. "Perhaps you're right," she admitted. "I am a success here, at least. But oh, Constance, it costs so much! It seems cruel that I can't sleep at night when I do get the chance, that ideas, and plans, and worries must swarm about and settle upon my brain until I feel that my days are eating up my nights."

Constance had finished and was drawing on her gloves. Suddenly she stopped short, and her steel gray eyes lighted with inspiration. "Where are you going this afternoon?" she demanded.

"I don't know. Anywhere. I must have something in by five."

"Well, I have a proposition to make to you. Go home and go to bed and sleep. Take something to make you sleep if it's as bad as that, and meet me here at five. I'll guarantee to have a story for you. Will you?"

Marion stared at her wide-eyed. "I couldn't let you," she began, with the sharp decision of one on the verge of surrender. "It wouldn't be right."

"Don't be idiotic!" Constance retorted. She came closer and laid her arm across the girl's shoulder. "Fate has been playing into my hands this morning. It would be a positive crime for me not to play up to the cards that I've been dealt. You have it in your power to give me a few hours of *real* happiness, girl. Won't you do it?"

Five minutes later she was out in the street with Marion Nickels' note book, her brain already busy with plans. The aimlessness of the morning's wanderings had suddenly assumed definite significance. There was Val Plingetto, the notorious burglar. The hints that Madison had dropped were clew enough to start on, and she decided on a visit to the Union Bank.

A short walk brought her to its doors, to find them shut, and the information "closed" staring at her through the screening. Around at the back, she met the boy who swept out the halls, and she stopped for a friendly chat.

"Hello, Bob! Had a pretty lively time here last night, didn't you?"

He grinned with an air of deep importance. "Been havin' a lively time all day, too," he replied.

"How much do you suppose he got away with?" she queried in tones of casual interest.

"Aw, he didn't get so much, but I'll bet he's made a bunch of trouble for Hicks."

"Oh, is that so? Hicks is the night watchman, isn't he?"

"Used to be," he replied darkly.

"Has he given up the job?" she humored him.

The boy assumed a bored expression. "Guess he'll have to go," he replied, with elaborate unconcern. "He's liable to be run in any minute. They think he was in the deal."

He paused a moment to allow this its full dramatic due. Then: "There was a woman came down here this morning. Gee! She certainly was all in. Said the trouble had about killed Hicks. He'd written her a letter about it. The folks told me not to let anybody in, so I sent her packin'."

"How in the world did you do it?" Constance's face showed awed admiration.

"Oh, I took her address and told her the Chief would send up a message later. It's the only way to settle 'em."

"Let me see the address, will you? Thanks. You're a wonder, Bob."

A roundabout walk and two transfers brought her to the house, out near the Presidio. The excited ser-

vant who answered her ring told her that the lady of the house could see no one.

"I think she'll see me," Constance answered calmly. "Tell her that I come from the Union Bank."

The girl disappeared, and there was the sound of quick footsteps overhead. A few minutes later a little blonde woman hurried into the parlor. Her eyes were wide and frightened, and her hair tumbled about her ears. Constance noted that she was pretty, very pretty, with that helpless beauty that appeals to men. Her quick eyes took in every detail of the dainty, disordered negligeé. She was the type who would always be charming in any disarray. There was an expression almost of envy in the reporter's eyes.

"I'm so glad you've come," the little woman began. "I don't know a soul in town and I feel that I must go to him."

Constance drew her gently toward a chair.

"I'm not a bank official," she explained. "I'm a reporter on the *Morning Record* and I want the details of the bank robbery."

The woman seemed scarcely to hear her.

"Will you go with me to the place?" she begged. "Mr. Hicks wrote me a letter,—you know we're engaged,—and he said that the trouble last night had 'revealed things.' I don't know what kind of things he means, but he thinks the bank people will do something terrible to him, and he's going away."

The steel gray eyes of the woman opposite glowed with sudden fire.

"Where does he live?" she demanded.

In distraught, incoherent words the little woman gave the address. When she had noted it down, Constance rose and took one of the small hands in hers.

"You must not come," she said gently. "It would do no good and might bring you into disagreeable

notoriety. I will go down there and find out all I can and let you know. If it's something I can't telephone, I'll send a messenger, but you must not stir out of the house."

The other woman sank down on the couch. Something in Constance's voice made her want to obey. She gazed up at her in mute appeal, and quite unaccountably the reporter recalled at that same instant, a mass of drooping violets on the center table at home. She stopped halfway across the room.

"Don't be anxious," she begged. "I'll send you word as soon as possible and I'll not mention you in anything I write."

Then she was gone, hurrying along the street, the exhilaration of the old life blotting out all else. What mattered in all the world, now that she had struck once more the scent of a story!

At the door of the apartment house to which she had been directed she paused for a moment; something seemed to be holding her back. No one answered her ring, and she followed the narrow walk around to the back of the house. The colored woman who was hanging out clothes upon the line directed her to Hicks' room.

"But Ah don' know if he's there or not," she called after Constance. "Ah neveh knows till Ah goes in to clean up his room of evenin's."

Constance walked along the dark hallway and rapped sharply on the door which bore Hicks' card. There was no answer. She rapped again. Finding that the door was not locked, she opened it and went in.

* * * * * * * * *

It was ten minutes past five when the door of Denny's restaurant opened and a girl came in. The pointed-faced waiter recognized her as one of the *Record* reporters, and knew that she must have come

in at that hour to keep an appointment. She crossed to the corner table and sat down. Once she glanced nervously at her watch, and then began moving the salt shakers about with nervous twitches.

Ten minutes later, another woman, also known to the head waiter, came in and crossed to the corner table.

"I've got it," she said to the girl, and without exultation Constance drew out a crumpled note book. "I'm a little late, but I 'phoned to the office, in your name, of course, to save space. The sooner this is set up the better, for it's a scoop."

Marion Nickels seized the book, and the ex-reporter's hands in hers.

"Oh, Constance, I can't say it as I want to, but you're—a brick! I'm afraid you're dead tired."

Fairly pushing the girl into her cloak Constance answered quietly: "I am tired, yes, and somewhat unnerved. But it's a different feeling when there's something to go home to. By the way, don't hurry away from the office. Ned is coming around for you in his machine."

When the girl had hurried out into the street, Constance sank into a chair and rested her head on her arms. The pointed-faced waiter approached hesitatingly. Something in her attitude made him fear to address her.

"Would madam like a bite of something, or perhaps a cocktail?"

"No, I don't want anything to eat," she answered.

She still sat there at the corner table until the room began to fill with diners, when, abruptly, she went out into the street.

It had grown quite dark, and the street lights had changed the dusk to evening. On the crowded corner where she waited for her car, she collided suddenly

with a man who carried a great bunch of fragrant violets. He raised his hat, then stared in surprise.

"Constance!"

"Oh, it's you, Arthur! I—I didn't see where I was going."

"You're late getting home, dear." His voice was full of solicitude, and he reached over to pull her fur more closely about her throat. "Aren't you tired?"

The shrill cry of a newsboy broke sharply behind them:

"Extra! Extra here! All about suicide of bank watchman!"

Constance leaned over suddenly; with a new surrender in her touch, a surrender that thrilled the man beside her with happiness, she slipped her hand through the arm that held the violets.

PALS

JULIA B. FOSTER

PALS

A YOUNG, slim woman with fluffy, hay-colored hair and pencilled eyes and brows, got off the cars at Gem City Station, in the San Joaquin Valley.

The conductor leaned out to give her directions: "Keep straight out on the road about a mile, and you'll come to Gem. You can't miss it." Then the train moved slowly past the woman.

Her smile of indifference lasted while she counted the long line of trundling freight cars; after which her attention roved to her surroundings. The great, sliding doors of the warehouse toward which the train rolled were pushed back, revealing an interior piled high with plump bags. In the recessed gloom of the barn-like structure, the bags lay like fatted swine, awaiting the market. Bags of wheat were in the open, on every side; heaped on the platform, ready for shipping; filling big, idle wagons; and the vast stretch of stubbly plain on either hand, silently sang the song of grain.

The young woman—a lonely figure!—scanned the horizon, one hand above her eyes, to keep from blinking at the brightness tangling in the oven-like atmosphere. The smell of grain smote the nostril,—clung to the garments. The boards, the air flung it out! Bready to repletion; fragrant to satiety! The woman tasted between her lips the musty tang of wheat. A little swirl of wind passed her, and she flicked chaff from her sleeve.

Finally, she turned to the ticket window, and as it slammed shut, an amused gleam shot from her eyes. The station master made haste from a back door, and

hurried up the road. She looked after him, and while her indifferent smile hovered over her blackened brows and the stain of red about her mouth, she murmured, "Family man!"

A fresh young voice behind her called, "Hey, Lady!" and she swung on her high heel to face a girl in a buckboard, the sound of whose wheels the dust had deadened. The rig drew in to the platform, between two of the standing wagons.

To relieve the slight embarrassment of the situation, the newcomer began to berate her restless horse: "You, Ginger, you! Stop that, now. Don't you know a lady when you see her?"

The stranger on the platform gave a laugh of comradeship, for in spite of the words, the girlish voice was coaxing, and the touch on the lines, soothing. Ginger at last consented to tolerate his bit, but he still swished his knotted gray tail, and danced with his hind feet.

The girl eased on the reins and swung her thick braid of red hair behind her shoulder, as she hazarded, "I reckon you're aimin' for Gem City, lady! Well, there ain't no way but to foot it, 'thout you like to ride in with me. I've got room a-plenty on the seat. Your little trunk can go in under our feet."

The stranger unhesitatingly accepted: "Why, yes, if you'll be so kind." She brought her suit-case to the buckboard, lifted a kid shoe to the step, then started back. "My Gawd, Nell Hendricks, this ain't you!"

After a keen glance, the answer came: "I'm sure Nell Hendricks that was, but who you air, I dunno. Why,—why!" Nellie's clear, blue eyes took sharper note of the face laughing into hers. "Why, sure as I live, it's Lizzie Sullivan!"

Nellie reached across the wheel, her tanned hand cordially outstretched. Lizzie clasped it heartily, her

face warming as she replied, with the excitement of renewed friendship, "You're a surprise package, you are, Nellie! Who'd have thought we'd meet up together, after all this time? Talk about luck!"

Nellie hospitably insisted, "Well, git in! I'm reck'nin' to carry Jim into Gem, and then out home. That's what I come fer, but the seat's roomy, and I shan't object, Lizzie, to *your* settin' clost to Jim." She flirted the cotton carriage robe, then laid it across her friend's lap, even leaning to tuck it in at the side. "There's a heap o' dust, and your clo'es is so stylish," she explained.

"Jim!—who's he?" Lizzie asked, after settling comfortably.

"Who's *Jim?*—why, he's my husband. Foreman on the Heckley ranch, back yender where we live." With her whip, Nellie pointed over her shoulder, into the vague distance behind them.

"*You—married?*" the other exclaimed, astonished.

Nellie nodded. "Yep, been married six months."

"Well, I never! And you with your hair hanging in a braid yet! Why don't you do it up, now?"

"Well, I ain't really but seventeen, you know, and besides, Jim says he likes to have me look like a little girl. His taste's mine, now."

"That settles it." Lizzie laughed, then added soberly, "I'm six years older than you are, Nellie; I'm twenty-three. Only twenty-three, and sometimes I feel a hundred."

"I reckon you've had a lot of experience to make you feel that a-way."

"I certainly have had my share; mine and yours, too, I guess," frankly admitted Lizzie.

"I wonder why Jim don't come on out!" Nellie glanced impatiently toward the warehouse. "Well, talkin' 'bout hair," she pursued, puzzled. "You al-

ways was some of a tow-head, but nothin' like what you air now. Them frizzles is certainly great, though they ain't got no more life-look to 'em than dead grass has. Say, I shampoo my hair with eggs, 'cause Jim, he likes it shiny."

"Uh-huh!" encouraged Lizzie, looking at the girl, the horse, at the piles of grain bags, and at the plain that kept on to the horizon, as if she sized them all up.

After her scrutiny of the whitewashed face, Nellie decided, "You've changed a lot, Liz. Your eyes is just grand; they're enough to melt in anybody's mouth. But, someways, you don't look to seem real healthy. Been havin' the chills and fever, mebbe."

"No, I'm well enough, I guess. Let's talk about you some more. You remember we used to be pals, although I was so much older."

"Yes, you always stood up fer me, Lizzie, right or wrong. I ain't fergot. I've thought of you, lots o' times."

"You were too little to run the streets without someone to take your part," excused Lizzie.

Nellie joyously interrupted, "Oh, there's Jim!" She puckered her lips and sent a shrill whistle toward the warehouse. "He always wears his hat that a-way," she said proudly, pointing at a man who stood in the wide doorway, outlined against the mountain of bags within. He waved his hand, disappeared, and came out again with an empty bag.

Nellie delicately conveyed the idea of her husband's thoughtfulness: "He's bringin' a bag fer the butcher's meat; Jim does the buyin'. Sundays, he gits ice and makes ice cream."

Lizzie watched the man as he came slowly toward them. He turned the bag, and with a strong hand beat out the chaff and straws against his leg. He was big and sinewy, his walk bespeaking a cheerful well-being.

"Lizzie Went Over to the Pile
of Bags on the Edge of the Platform
and Sat Down to Wait"

His face and hands were tanned red, like Nellie's, and the ends of his hair were sunburned. He was lazily chewing a straw, and smiling.

Lizzie commented, "Yes, he's just the kind that'd *want* his wife to look like a little girl!"

"Oh, Jim!" Nellie hailed happily, when he came close enough. "Here's an old friend o' mine. Miss Sullivan—Mr. Mahan!"—he was at the wheel, now. "Git in, Jim; there's room. Mind you don't crowd on Lizzie, there!"

Jim spat out the straw. An expression of repulsion crossed his features, as if Miss Sullivan's grand eyes and hair were taken at their value. He touched the rim of his hat with one finger, threw the bag in the bottom of the buckboard, and sprang heavily in, past his wife. "Here!" she expostulated, laughing. "I never said you was to mash me clean to jell! Set over furder to Lizzie."

Jim glanced furtively at the strange lady, hitched without result, and took the reins.

"Now drive slow," admonished Nellie, "fer me and Lizzie's got a lot to say."

"Ye-e-es," agreed Lizzie, boldly. "I've got lots to say, and you can bet I'm going to say it. First, tell me, Nell, how you come to be in this part of the country."

She leaned forward, talking across Mahan. His shoulders drooped, and he had pulled his hat over his eyes. The sun was hot, and it glared on the denuded fields, but Lizzie's eyes, as purposeful eyes that are unaccustomed sometimes will, met the glare defiantly, until it seemed as if it must smite the nerve.

Nellie shuddered as she replied: "Well, I'm tryin' to live down the old alley life, Lizzie. The big fire that wiped out South o' Market, sorter wiped out a heap o' things, but—!" She cried out, and her hus-

band put a stealthy hand on the little sunburned fist, doubled on her knee, "—but, Liz, you bring it back to me, now!"

"Uh-huh!" murmured Lizzie, understandingly.

With a gulp, Nellie continued: "The Settlement ladies was mighty good to me, and then the Child's Welfare took me."

"Yes, I heard," supplemented Lizzie. "And then I lost you, for I was too old for the Society. Lord, I wisht I hadn't been!"

Nellie went on: "Some folks out here by the name of Heckley, that hadn't no children, sent to the Child's Welfare for a little girl, and I traveled down from 'Frisco, alone, with a ticket round my neck. I was put in care of the conductor, and I come along all right. Mrs. Heckley met me at the last stoppin' place, —there wan't no railroad then to Gem City,—and we druv over the plains. I thought we was lost,— the country seemed so big."

"Uh-huh!" assented Lizzie, absently looking into the distance. The dust was settling in the lines about her eyes and mouth. The plain and the sky grew purple where they met, and the gentler color seemed to rest her unblinking eyes.

Nellie concluded, somewhat lamely: "Well, and I just stayed here with the Heckleys, ever since I come." She stopped for a minute, then went on in hasty confession: "Jim knows everything about me. I ain't kept back nothin'. I told him I used to swear, and steal cakes from the baker wagon, and ice from the ice wagon, and fruit from the fruit stands. I said there was another girl helped me out of scrapes, didn't I, Jim? Well, 'twas Lizzie Sullivan was my friend. Lizzie, Jim belonged to South o' Market, too, and he knows his little old 'Frisco through and through, but he's reformed, same as us. He's straighter'n a string,

Jim is. I'd trust you, wouldn't I, Jim?" She snuggled his arm, as she spoke to him. "Now, Lizzie, I want to hear about you." Nellie leaned back, satisfied that she had said the right things.

"Ye-e-es!" drawled Lizzie absently. And then she seemed to wake up. "I'm on the track of a man,—*my* man! I've been hunting him for two years, more or less. I've never give up. I've got it in for him. Let him watch out!"

Nellie laughed, and the situation seemed less tense. "That sounds as if there was a hound-dog to it, someways," she interrupted.

Lizzie continued with asperity: "I've been like a hound, running everywhere, ears open, eyes open, and nose to the ground, hunting for tracks."

"Was you married to him?" queried Nellie, gravely rubbing her cheek against Jim's shoulder.

"*Married!*" repeated Lizzie, curiously. "Lord, no! I ain't got a hold on him. I'm just hunting him for fu-u-un,"—she drawled again, and looked askance, her eyes half shut,—"but if he knows it, he's scared, I bet." Her voice rasped.

Suddenly, Gem City sprang out of the plain,—a church spire, a town hall, a flag staff,—anything that reached up. Then a street built up of one-story frame on one side; the opposite side, wide-open to the widening plain. A row of vehicles lined up the sidewalk, and the horses, both bridled and harnessed, stood with their forefeet on the curb, looking into the stores.

A pile of calico and gingham advertised a dry-goods store, and Nellie said suddenly: "Say, Jim, wait here fer a minute. I've got to have a yard more fer my dress." She stepped from the buckboard, and left Lizzie and Jim together.

For a moment they were silent, and then the woman spoke: "Well, Chimmy!" she said, mockingly.

He replied, "You hound from hell!"

There was nothing more. The few words said all.

In another minute, Nellie came out, her package in her hand. She stopped in the doorway to speak over her shoulder, then called to her husband: "Say, Jim, you git out and leave Lizzie and me room. Sile White, inside here, is willin' to drop you at Heckley's, on his way home. I told him you'd be glad of the chanct. Git two pounds and a half o' round steak."

The slump of Jim's chin and shoulders revealed to Lizzie the fear he must feel at leaving the two women together.

Nellie, still in the store entrance, chided, "Come on ahead, Jim!" She ruffled like a bantam hen at his reluctance.

Lizzie clucked tauntingly. Then Jim rose stiffly, and stepped out, like a man of seventy. "Liz, for God's sake!" he implored. He stumbled away, followed by her low, exultant laugh.

Nellie passed her husband with a huffy jerk of her skirts, got into the buckboard, and gathered the reins. "Jim's so careless! Ginger was apt to start up, with the lines loose on his back like that!"

Lizzie replied with a touch of bitterness, "Jim wouldn't be so precious careful of me as he is of you, Nell."

Ginger stretched his nose toward home, and started off at a lively trot.

Nellie threw her head to get her braid behind her shoulder, and inquired, "Where'd you reckon to stay, here in Gem?"

"I hadn't any plan. I let things like that happen just as they will."

"Well, this time it happens you're goin' to the Heckley ranch with me, till you can git your bearin's, Lizzie. Ever been on a grain ranch?"

"No, 'course not."

"This is your chance, then. You'll be surprised when you see Heckley's big place, how 't Jim could git to be its foreman, so quick; but he's got a good head, and he's a worker. Mrs. Heckley said there wasn't no man round here she'd rather I'd marry than Jim. He's a risin' man, I tell you. Look how he just come out o' nothin', same as you and me! He says 't ain't no difference to anybody what he was once; the only thing that matters is what he is now. His sayin' that, helped me a lot. 'T ain't no matter the little gutter-snipes you and me *was,*—it's just a question of what sorter women we air *now.* Jim's earned a good name fer himself, and the men round here all respects him."

Lizzie mused, "And he's your husband, Nell!"

"Yes, and mighty kind he is to me, Liz."

"That's good. A good husband can be the makin' of a girl."

"We-ell,"—Nellie hesitated a little. "The girl's got to do her part, too, I reckon."

The evening breeze touched Lizzie's cheek, and she breathed the coolness gratefully. She asked, "Do you feel like takin' a perfect stranger out to these folks you're livin' with?"

Nellie twitched Ginger into a trot again. "Yes, indeed; any friend of mine and Jim's is welcome. You don't know how turrible good they was to me, at first; so 'fraid I'd cry. Jim's pulled *himself* up, but the Heckley's made *me,*—why, they made me fit to marry *him!* Did you take notice to the two-story, red-brick buildin', back a-ways on the railroad? No? Well, it's the District Grammar School. I was allowed to git an edjication; I can write a real good hand."

Lizzie nodded. "Uh-huh! You don't talk the alley patter any more, either. You've got hold on something better."

"I don't talk no different from the rest o' folks round here," returned Nellie. "Us girls all got edjicated together. Say, I sung, once, at an entertainment in the schoolhouse."

Lizzie was ready with praise: "Yes,—that's fine!"

"Well, you don't talk the old South o' Market, either, Liz," said Nellie, betraying curiosity, for the first time.

"For three years I went to the Reform School, Nell, and that's when my man left town. I was learned to talk right, but my experience ain't been pleasant, like yours. Out here, in this wheaty land, with folks to care about you!"

Just then, the station agent who had been toiling home along the hot, dusty road, kicked his boots against a fence post, then swung open a gate leading up the shrub-bordered path to a cottage. A child, its yellow hair blowing about its face, toddled down the path to meet him, and he rapturously caught the little one in his arms.

An indefinable expression flitted across Nellie's girlish face. "That's Walker, the ticket agent. I reckon he was in a hurry to git home; there's a new baby there."

"A new baby!" repeated Lizzie.

Nellie looked at her, and their eyes met. Something—a knowledge—passed from one woman to the other; a wavering filament of understanding, drawing them together. Slowly Nellie's face turned a different tinge of red. "Uh-huh!" she confessed.

"Why, Nellie!" exclaimed Lizzie, wonderingly, the moisture in her softened eyes answering Nellie's flush.

By and by, the latter said in a low, contented tone, "And we're goin' to have a little home of our own, Jim and me are, down in one corner of the Heckley ranch; it's buildin' now,—four rooms."

"Don't rub it in, Nell!" answered Lizzie, with a soft cry in her voice.

Silence fell between the two, as if both were day-dreaming. The breeze freshened still more; Ginger chafed at his restraining bit. Suddenly, Lizzie roused. "I didn't tell you about my man, Nell; he was one-eyed, and walked lame. Uh-huh!" she broke out fiercely.

Nellie whispered, "Did you love him, Lizzie?"

"I come—nearer—to lovin' him, now, than—I ever did before. Seein' you, you know, and all."

"Why, Lizzie Sullivan!"

"Uh-huh!"

Nellie was awed as she saw two tears roll over the black shadows beneath Lizzie's eyes.

The latter sat resolutely up. She announced: "I've changed my mind—I'm goin' back to 'Frisco. My man ain't round here, anyhow, I guess. Take me to the station. I'm just *homesick* to get away. I'd die before I'd go home with you."

Something hushed Nellie, after her first perfunctory words of pleading. She objected, feebly, "The train goes back in the night," and then the subtle consciousness in her woman's make-up, kept her silent. She chirped to Ginger, and the buckboard soon drove up to the station, now dark and deserted. The loaded cars, up by the warehouse, waited for their scheduled hour.

Lizzie patted Nellie's shoulder before getting out of the buckboard. She said gently: "Don't you worry about me; I ain't afraid. I'll sit down on one of those bags over there, and the agent 'll soon be back. I always get my sleep on the cars, so don't you fret."

Nellie whimpered a little: "Oh, Liz!"

"There, there, now, Nell; remember you've got your husband. And you and me'll always stay pals. Don't

forget that description, will you?—lame, and blind of one eye. Tell Jim to watch out for that man. Good-bye; let me see you start for home, Nellie."

Ginger's hoofs padded off in the dust of the road, and the rattle of the buckboard's wheels died away in the soft dark. Lizzie went over to the pile of bags on the farther edge of the platform, and sat down to wait. The rich scent of the grain closed in about her; enwrapped her; clung to her. It was insistent, and it was sweet and pure. By and by, she took out her handkerchief, wet its corner with her tongue, and washed away the black lines under her eyes.

THE ENCHANTED MESA

CHARLES F. LUMMIS

THE ENCHANTED MESA

HEAR ye, people of Acoma, for I, the Governor, speak. Tomorrow ye go down to the fields to plough; already it is the month of rain, and there is little in the storerooms. Let all go forth, that we build shelters of cedar and stay in the fields. The women, also, to cook for us. Take ye, each one, food for a month. And pray that the Sun-Father, Pa-yat-yama, give us much corn this year."

As white-headed Kai-a-tan-ish passed deliberately down in front of the houses, the soft Queres words rolling sonorously from his deep throat, the people stopped their work to listen to him. The ruddy sun was just resting over the cliffs of the Black Mesa, which walled the pretty valley on the west, and the shadows of the houses were creeping far out along the rocky floor of the town.

Such quaint houses as they were! Built of gray adobe, terraced so that the three successive stories receded like a gigantic flight of steps, they stood in three parallel rows, each a continuous block a thousand feet long, divided by interior walls into wee but comfortable tenements. There were no doors nor windows in the lower story, but tall ladders reached to the roof, which formed a sort of broad piazza before the second-story door. Women were washing their hair with the soapy root of the palmilla, on the yard-like roofs, or coming home from the great stone reservoir with gayly decorated tinajas of rainwater perched confidently upon their heads. Children ran races along the smooth rock which served for a street, or cared for their mothers' babies slung upon their patient young backs.

The men were very busy, tying up bundles in buckskin, putting new handles on their stone axes and hoes, or fitting to damaged arrows new heads shaped from pieces of quartz or volcanic glass.

As the Governor kept his measured way down the street, repeating his proclamation at intervals, a tall, powerfully made Indian stepped from one of the houses, descended the ladder to the ground, and walked out toward the sunset until he could go no farther. He stood on the edge of a dizzy cliff. From its beetling top the old cedars in the plain below looked like dark green moss. For in those days the Queres' city of Acoma stood on the rock of Katzimo —a great round, stone table, two miles in circumference, and with perpendicular walls half a thousand feet high. The level valley, two miles wide, was hemmed in by cliffs, forming a gigantic box; and in the very center rose the red Rock of Katzimo.

Sho-ka-ka stood looking out at the fiery sunset with a sad and absorbed expression. He did not hear the patter of bare feet on the rock behind him, nor did he turn till a small hand nestled in his own, and a boy's clear voice said:

"Ah, Tata! Tomorrow we go to the planting! The Governor has said it. And perhaps I may kill rabbits with the new bow thou didst make me. When I am bigger, I will use it to kill the wicked Apaches."

The man laid his muscular hand upon the boy's head and drew it to his side. "Still for war and the chase!" he said fondly. "But it is better to kill rabbits and deer than men. Think thou of that, A-chi-te. We Queres fight only to save our homes, not for the sake of fighting and plunder, as do the Apaches. But thy mother is very sick and can not go to the fields, and it is not kind to leave her alone. Only that I am a councillor of the city and must give a good ex-

ample in working, I would stay with her. A hundred children will go to the fields, but thou shalt be a man to keep the town. Two other women lie sick near the estufa, and thou shalt care for thy mother and for them."

The boy's lips quivered for an instant with disappointment; but Pueblo children never even *think* disobedience, and he shut his teeth firmly.

"Poor Nana!" (mother) he said, "poor little Mamma! Truly she can not be left alone. And, if the Apaches come, I will roll down such stones on them that they shall think the Hero Brothers have come down from the Sun-Father's house to fight for Acoma!"

"That is my brave. Now run thou home and grind the dried meat and put it in my pouch, that I may be ready to start early. All else is done. If thou dost well while I am gone, I will make thee the best bow and quiver of arrows in all Acoma."

A-chi-te started homeward, running like a deer. He was fifteen years old, tall for his age, clean-limbed and deep-chested. His heavy black hair was cut straight above his big, black eyes, and behind fell below his shoulders. He had the massive but clear-cut features of his father—a face of remarkable strength and beauty, despite the swarthy skin.

Sho-ka-ka sighed, as the boy ran off. "It is in an ill time that we start for the planting. I saw an owl in the cedars today, and it would not fly when I shouted. And when I smoked the holy smoke I could not blow it upward at all. Perhaps the spirits are angry with us. It is good that we make a sacrifice tonight, to put their anger to sleep." And he strode thoughtfully away to the great, round estufa, where the councillors were to smoke and deliberate upon the morrow's work.

When the Sun-Father peeped over the eastern mesas in the morning, he looked in the eyes of his expectant children. Motionless and statuesque they stood upon the housetops awaiting his coming; and now they bowed reverently as his round, red house rose above the horizon. A solemn sacrifice had been offered the night before, and all the medicine men deemed the omens favorable, save old Poo-ya-tye, who shook his head but could not tell what he feared.

Already a long procession of men, women and children, bearing heavy burdens for the packs, was starting toward the southern brink of the cliff. A deep, savage cleft, gnawed out by the rains of centuries, afforded a dangerous path for five hundred feet downward; and then began the great Ladder Rock. A vast stone column, once part of the mesa, but cut off by the erosion of unnumbered ages, had toppled over so that its top leaned against the cliff, its base being two hundred feet out in a young mountain of soft white sand. Up this almost precipitous rock a series of shallow steps had been cut. To others, this dizzy ladder would have seemed insurmountable; but these sure-footed Children of the Sun thought nothing of it. It gave the only possible access to the mesa's top, and a well-aimed stone would roll a climbing enemy in gory fragments to the bottom. They could afford a little trouble for the sake of having the most impregnable city in the world—these quiet folk who hated war, but lived among the most desperate savage warriors the world has ever known.

The seeds, the provisions, the stone hand-mills, the stone axes and hoes, the rude ploughs,—each made of a young pine, with one short strong branch left near the butt for a share,—were packed in convenient bundles upon the backs of the men; and the women had each a child clinging behind her. As Sho-ka-ka

strode away, he turned to look up once more at the rock, and at the tiny figure outlined against the sky. It seemed no more than a wee black ant, but he knew it was his son, A-chi-te, and waved his hand as he yelled back, "Sha-wa-tsosh!" from lungs as mighty as those of Montezuma.

In half an hour the long procession had melted into the brown bosom of the valley; and even A-chi-te's keen eye could distinguish it no longer. He drew a deep breath, threw back his square young shoulders and walked away to his mother's house. Alone with three sick women, the only man in Acoma—no wonder the boy's head was carried even straighter than usual. Truly, this was better than going to the planting. All the boys had gone there, but he was trusted to guard alone the proudest city of the Queres! He ran up the tall ladder and entered the house. At one side of the dark little room lay his mother on a low bed of skins. The boy put his warm cheek against the wasted face, and a thin hand crept up and stroked his heavy hair. "Little one of my heart," she whispered, "are they all gone?"

"All gone, Nana; I am left to guard thee and the town. Now await me while I make thee a drink."

A-chi-te went over to the big lava metate, at the other side of the room, drew from a buckskin bag a handful of blue corn that had been parched in the big beehive of an oven, and laying the hard kernels on the sloping block, began to scrub them to powder with a small slab of lava, flat on one side and rounded on the other to fit the hand. When the corn was reduced to a fine, bluish meal, he brushed it carefully into a little earthen bowl, and with a gourd-cup dipped some water from a cajete. This he poured slowly upon the meal, stirring with a stick, till the bowl was full of a thin, sweet porridge.

"Drink, Nana," he said, holding the bowl to her lips, and supporting her head on his left arm. "Then I will carry atole to Stchu-muts and Kush-eit-ye."

When he had fed his three charges and carried a supply of gnarled cedar sticks into each house to feed the queer little mud fire-places,—for at that altitude of over seven thousand feet, it was cold even in summer,—A-chi-te turned his attention to the duty which naturally seemed to his boyish ambition the most important, to guard the town. He slung over his shoulder his bow and arrows, in a case made from the skin of mo-keit-cha, the mountain lion. Then he went scouring over the pueblo, gathering up all the stones he could find, from the size of his fist to that of his head, and carried them down to the foot of the great cleft where the Ladder Rock began. Here he stowed them in a little recess in the rock; and as they were not so many as he thought desirable, he added to them several score adobe bricks from ruined houses. When this was done he viewed his battery with great satisfaction. "Now let the Apaches come! Truly, they will find it bitter climbing!" And indeed, it was so. So long as his rude ammunition should hold out, the boy alone could hold at bay a thousand foes. No arrow could reach to his lofty perch, nor could the strongest climber withstand even his lightest missile on that dizzy "ladder."

A-chi-te now brought down some skins and made a little bed beside his pile of stones. There was no danger that the Apaches would come in the daytime, and he could sleep with his weapons by his side, so that they should not surprise him by night. During the day he could devote himself to the sick.

Two days went by uneventfully, and A-chi-te was disappointed. Why did not the Apaches come, that he might show his father how well he could guard Acoma?

The third day dawned cloudy, and a ragged, sullen drift hid the Peak of Snow away to the north. In the afternoon the rain began to sweep down violently, a savage wind dashing it against the adobes as if to hurl them from their solid foundations. Little rivers ran down the streets and poured from the edges of the cliff in hissing cataracts. A perfect torrent was running down the cleft and spreading out over the great Ladder Rock in a film of foam. Luckily, A-chi-te's missiles and bed were out of its reach.

"Surely thou wilt not sleep in the Ladder tonight," said his mother as she listened to the roar of the storm.

"Yes, Nana, it must be. In such a night the Apaches are likeliest to come. I am not salt, that the rain should melt me, and my bed is above the running water. What would Tata say if he came home and found I had let the Apaches in for fear of getting myself wet?"

When he had fed the sick, A-chi-te took his bow and quiver and started for his post. It was already growing dark, and the storm showed no sign of abatement. It was a fearful climb down to his little crow's nest of a fort. The narrow, slippery path was at an average angle of over fifty degrees, and was now choked with a seething torrent. He had at one time to climb along precarious ledges above the water, and at another to trust himself waist deep in that avalanche of foam—keeping from being swept down to instant death only by pressing desperately against the rocky walls of the gorge, here not more than three feet apart. But at last, trembling with exhaustion, he drew himself up to his little niche and sank upon his drenched bed, while the white torrent bellowed and raved under his feet, as if maddened at the loss of its expected prey. Deeper and deeper grew the darkness, fiercer and fiercer the storm. Such a rain had never been seen

before in all the country of the Hano Oshatch. It came down in great sheets that veered and slanted with the desperate wind, dug up stout cedars by the roots, and pried great rocks from their lofty perches to send them thundering down the valley. To the shivering boy, drenched and alone in his angle of the giant cliff, it was a fearful night; and older heroes than he would have been pardoned for uneasiness. But he never thought of leaving his post; and, hugging the rocky wall to escape as far as he could the pitiless pelting of the cold rain, he watched the long hours through.

"A-chi-te! A-chi-te!"

Surely that could not be his mother's voice! The gray dawn was beginning to assert itself on the dense blackness of the sky. The rain and the wind were more savage than ever. She could not be heard from the house, he thought—and yet—

"A-chi-te! A-chi-te!"

It *was* her voice; and in surprise and consternation A-chi-te started up the cleft. It was still dark in that narrow, lofty walled chasm; the torrent was deeper and wilder than before. It was easier to go up than down in such a place, but it was all his lithe young limbs and strong muscles could do to bring him to the top. There stood his mother, her soft black hair blown far out on the fierce wind, her great eyes shining unnaturally in their shrunken settings.

"Sashe mut-yet-sa! The house is fallen! It has broken my arm, and Kush-eit-ye is buried to her head under a wall. The White Shadows have come for us! Thou must run to thy father, and bring him home before we die! Run, my brave, soul of my heart!"

The boy looked at her, then down the roaring chasm. It was far worse than when he had descended before. And the Ladder Rock—could he do it? He

put his arm across his mother's shoulder and drew her head against his cheek, patting her back gently,—the quaint embrace of his people.

"Get thee into a house, Nana. I go for Tata. Shawa-tsosh!" And in another moment he had disappeared between the black jaws of the abyss.

The horror of a lifetime was in that few hundred feet. Blinded by the rain, deafened by the hoarse thunder of the stream, he let himself down foot by foot with desperate strength. Once the flood swept his feet from under him and left him hanging by the clutch of his hands upon the walls. It took two full minutes to bring his feet back to the rock beneath. But at last he came to where the cleft widened and the frantic stream spouted out and went rolling down the precipitous slope of the Ladder Rock. Here he stood a moment to catch his breath, and then turning, began to back down the slippery rock, his hands dug fiercely into one foot-notch, while his toes groped in the hissing water for the notch below. His teeth were set, his bronze face was a ghastly gray, his eyes were like coals. The wet strands of his hair whipped his face like scourges, his finger-ends were bleeding as he pressed them against the sandstone. But slowly, automatically as a machine, he crept down, down, fighting the fierce water, clinging to the tiny toe-holes. Once he stopped. He was sure that he felt the rock tremble, and then despised himself for the thought. The great Ladder Rock tremble! Why, it was as solid as the mighty mesa!

It was half an hour before he reached the bottom of the rock; and when he looked downward, over his shoulder, he cried out aghast. The cataract had had its way with the great hill of fine sand on which the base of the rock rested; and where the path had been was now a great gully fifty feet deep. To drop was

certain death. He thought for a moment. Ah! the piñon! And he crawled to the side of the rock, which was here only a gentle slope. Sure enough there was the piñon tree still standing, but on the very edge of the chasm. It was fifteen feet out and ten feet below him —an ugly jump. But he drew a long breath and leaped out. Crashing down through the brittle branches, bruised and torn and bleeding, he righted himself at last and dropped to the ground. A moment's breathing-spell and he was dashing down the long sand-hill and then away up the valley. The fields were eight miles away. Would his strength last, sorely tried as it had been? He did not know; but he pressed his hand against his bleeding side and ran on.

Suddenly he felt the ground quiver beneath his feet. A strange, rushing sound filled his ears; and, whirling about, he saw the great Ladder Rock rear, throw its head out from the cliff, reel there an instant in mid-air, and then go toppling out into the plain like some wounded Titan. As those thousands of tons of rock smote upon the solid earth with a hideous roar, a great cloud went up, and the valley seemed to rock to and fro. From the face of the cliffs, three miles away, great rocks came leaping and thundering down, and the tall piñons swayed and bowed as before a hurricane. A-chi-te was thrown headlong by the shock, and lay stunned. The Ladder Rock had fallen—the unprecedented flood had undermined its sandy bed!

And the town—his mother! The boy sprang to his feet and began running again, stiffly, and with an awful pallor on his set face.

When the men of Acoma came running home, it was in deathly silence. And even when they stood beside that vast fallen pillar of stone, and looked up at the accursed cliff, not one could speak a word. There was Acoma, the City in the Sky, the home of their

forefathers; but their feet would never press its rocky streets again. Five hundred feet above their heads, against the sullen gray sky, flitted two wan figures whose frantic shrieks scarce reached the awe-struck crowd below. No ladder could ever be built to scale that dizzy height. The cliff everywhere was perpendicular. And so, forever exiled from the homes that were before their eyes, robbed of their all, heart-wrung by the sight of the doomed women on the cliff, the simple-hearted Children of the Sun circled long about the fatal Rock of Katzimo. Council after council was held, sacrifice after sacrifice was offered; but the merciless cliff still frowned unpityingly. It became plain that they must build a new town to be safe from the savage tribes which surrounded them on every side; and on a noble mesa, three miles to the south, they founded a new Acoma, where it stands today, four hundred feet above the plain, and safe from a similar catastrophe.

For weeks the two women haunted the brink of their aerial prison, and daily Sho-ka-ka and A-chi-te went to its foot with sympathizing neighbors to weep, and to scream out words of hopeless encouragement. Then Stchu-muts came no more, and Nai-chat-tye was alone. Back and forth she paced, like some caged beast chafing at the bars, and then, throwing up her wasted arms, sprang out to her death.

Full four hundred years have passed since then, and the land of the Pueblos is filling with a race of white-skinned strangers. Scientific expeditions have exhausted the ingenuity of civilization to scale the Rock of Katzimo, and recover its archaeological treasures, but all in vain. The natives shun it, believing it accursed.

And today, as I sit on the battlements of the Acoma that now is, watching the sunset glory creeping higher

up that wondrous island of ruddy rock to the north, an old Indian at my side tells the oft-repeated story of the Enchanted Mesa. He is the many-times-great-grandson of A-chi-te.

THE SON OF THE WOLF

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JACK LONDON

THE SON OF THE WOLF

MAN rarely places a proper valuation upon his womankind, at least not until deprived of them. He has no conception of the subtle atmosphere exhaled by the sex feminine so long as he bathes in it; but let it be withdrawn, and an ever-growing void begins to manifest itself in his existence, and he becomes hungry, in a vague sort of way, for something so indefinite that he cannot characterize it. If his comrades have no more experience than himself, they will shake their heads dubiously and dose him with strong physic. But the hunger will continue and become stronger; he will lose interest in the things of his everyday life and wax morbid; and one day, when the emptiness has become unbearable, a revelation will dawn upon him.

In the Yukon country, when this comes to pass, the man usually provisions a poling-boat, if it be summer, and if winter harnesses his dogs, and heads for the Southland. A few months later, supposing him to be possessed of a faith in the country, he returns with a wife to share with him in that faith, and incidentally in his hardships. This but serves to show the innate selfishness of man. It also brings us to the trouble of "Scruff" Mackenzie, which occurred in the old days, before the country was stampeded and staked by a tidal-wave of *che-cha-quas,* and when the Klondike's only claim to notice was its salmon fisheries.

Scruff Mackenzie bore the earmarks of a frontier birth and a frontier life. His face was stamped with twenty-five years of incessant struggle with Nature in her wildest moods,—the last two, the wildest and hardest of all, having been spent in groping for the

gold which lies in the shadow of the Arctic Circle. When the yearning sickness came upon him he was not surprised, for he was a practical man and had seen other men thus stricken. But he showed no sign of his malady, save that he worked harder. All summer he fought mosquitos and washed the sure-thing bars of the Stuart River for a double grub-stake. Then he floated a raft of house-logs down the Yukon to Forty Mile, and put together as comfortable a cabin as any the camp could boast of. In fact, it showed such cosy promise that many men elected to be his partner and to come and live with him. But he crushed their aspirations with rough speech, peculiar for its strength and brevity, and bought a double supply of grub from the trading-post.

As has been noted, Scruff Mackenzie was a practical man. If he wanted a thing he usually got it, but in doing so, went no farther out of his way than was necessary. Though a son of toil and hardship, he was averse to a journey of six hundred miles on the ice, a second of two thousand miles on the ocean, and still a third thousand miles or so to his last stamping-grounds,—all in the mere quest of a wife. Life was too short. So he rounded up his dogs, lashed a curious freight to his sled, and faced across the divide whose westward slopes were drained by the head-reaches of the Tanana.

He was a sturdy traveler, and his wolf-dogs could work harder and travel farther on less grub than any other team in the Yukon. Three weeks later he strode into a hunting-camp of the Upper Tanana Sticks. They marveled at his temerity; for they had a bad name and had been known to kill white men for as trifling a thing as a sharp axe or a broken rifle. But he went among them single-handed, his bearing being a delicious composite of humility, familiarity, sang-

froid, and insolence. It required a deft hand and deep knowledge of the barbaric mind effectually to handle such diverse weapons; but he was a past master in the art, knowing when to conciliate and when to threaten with Jove-like wrath.

He first made obeisance to the Chief, Thling-Tinneh, presenting him with a couple of pounds of black tea and tobacco, and thereby winning his most cordial regard. Then he mingled with the men and maidens, and that night gave a *potlatch.* The snow was beaten down in the form of an oblong, perhaps a hundred feet in length and a quarter as many across. Down the center a long fire was built, while either side was carpeted with spruce boughs. The lodges were forsaken, and the fivescore or so members of the tribe gave tongue to their folk-chants in honor of their guest.

Scruff Mackenzie's two years had taught him the not many hundred words of their vocabulary, and he had likewise conquered their deep gutterals, their Japanese idioms, constructions, and honorific and agglutinative particles. So he made oration after their manner, satisfying their instinctive poetry-love with crude flights of eloquence and metaphorical contortions. After Thling-Tinneh and the Shaman had responded in kind, he made trifling presents to the menfolk, joined in their singing, and proved an expert in their fifty-two-stick gambling game.

And they smoked his tobacco and were pleased. But among the younger men there was a defiant attitude, a spirit of braggadocio, easily understood by the raw insinuations of the toothless squaws and the giggling of the maidens. They had known few white men, "Sons of the Wolf," but from those few they had learned strange lessons.

Nor had Scruff Mackenzie, for all his seeming carelessness, failed to note these phenomena. In truth,

rolled in his sleeping-furs, he thought it all over, thought seriously, and emptied many pipes in mapping out a campaign. One maiden only had caught his fancy,—none other than Zarinska, daughter of the chief. In features, form, and poise, answering more nearly to the white man's type of beauty, she was almost an anomaly among her tribal sisters. He would possess her, make her his wife, and name her—ah, he would name her Gertrude! Having thus decided, he rolled over on his side and dropped off to sleep, a true son of his all-conquering race.

It was slow work and a stiff game; but Scruff Mackenzie manoeuvered cunningly, with an unconcern which served to puzzle the Sticks. He took great care to impress the men that he was a sure shot and a mighty hunter, and the camp rang with his plaudits when he brought down a moose at six hundred yards. Of a night he visited in Chief Thling-Tinneh's lodge of moose and cariboo skins, talking big and dispensing tobacco with a lavish hand. Nor did he fail to likewise honor the Shaman; for he realized the medicine-man's influence with his people, and was anxious to make of him an ally. But that worthy was high and mighty, refused to be propitiated, and was unerringly marked down as a prospective enemy.

Though no opening presented for an interview with Zarinska, Mackenzie stole many a glance at her, giving fair warning of his intent. And well she knew, yet coquettishly surrounded herself with a ring of women whenever the men were away and he had a chance. But he was in no hurry. Besides, he knew she could not help but think of him, and a few days of such thought would only better his suit.

At last, one night, when he deemed the time to be ripe, he abruptly left the chief's smoky dwelling and hastened to a neighboring lodge. As usual she sat with

squaws and maidens about her, all engaged in sewing moccasins and beadwork. They laughed at his entrance, and badinage, which linked Zarinska to him, ran high. But one after the other they were unceremoniously bundled into the outer snow, whence they hurried to spread the tale through all the camp.

His cause was well pleaded,—in her tongue, for she did not know his,—and at the end of two hours he rose to go.

"So Zarinska will come to the White Man's lodge? Good! I go now to have talk with thy father, for he may not be so minded. And I will give him many tokens; but he must not ask too much. If he say no? Good! Zarinska shall yet come to the White Man's lodge."

He had already lifted the skin flap to depart, when a low exclamation brought him back to the girl's side. She brought herself to her knees on the bearskin mat, her face aglow with true Eve-light, and shyly unbuckled his heavy belt. He looked down, perplexed, suspicious, his ears alert for the slightest sound without. But her next move disarmed his doubt, and he smiled with pleasure. She took from her sewing-bag a moose hide sheath, brave with bright beadwork, fantastically designed. She drew his great hunting-knife, gazed reverently along the keen edge, half tempted to try it with her thumb, and shot it into place in its new home. Then she slipped the sheath along the belt to its customary resting-place, just above the hip.

For all the world, it was like a scene of olden time,—a lady and her knight. Mackenzie drew her up full height and swept her red lips with his mustache,—the, to her, foreign caress of the Wolf. It was a meeting of the stone age and the steel.

There was a thrill of excitement in the air as Scruff Mackenzie, a bulky bundle under his arm, threw open

the flap of Thling-Tinneh's tent. Children were running about in the open, dragging dry wood to the scene of the *potlatch,* a babble of women's voices was growing in intensity, the young men were consulting in sullen groups, while from the Shaman's lodge rose the eerie sounds of an incantation.

The chief was alone with his blear-eyed wife, but a glance sufficed to tell Mackenzie that the news was already old. So he plunged at once into the business, shifting the beaded sheath prominently to the fore, as advertisement of the betrothal.

"O Thling-Tinneh, mighty chief of the Sticks and the land of the Tanana, ruler of the salmon and the bear, the moose and the cariboo! The White Man is before thee with a great purpose. Many moons has his lodge been empty, and he is lonely. And his heart has eaten itself in silence, and grown hungry for a woman to sit beside him in his lodge, to meet him from the hut with warm fire and good food. He has heard strange things, the patter of baby moccasins and the sound of children's voices. And one night a vision came upon him, and he beheld the Raven, who is thy father, the great Raven, who is the father of all the Sticks. And the Raven spake to the lonely White Man, saying: 'Bind thou thy moccasins upon thee, and gird thy snowshoes on, and lash thy sled with food for many sleeps and fine tokens for the Chief Thling-Tinneh. For thou shalt turn thy face to where the midspring sun is wont to sink below the land, and journey to this great chief's hunting grounds. There thou shalt make big presents, and Thling-Tinneh, who is my son, shall become to thee as a father. In his lodge there is a maiden into whom I breathe the breath of life for thee. This maiden shalt thou take to wife.'

"O Chief, thus spake the Raven; thus do I lay presents at thy feet; thus I come to take thy daughter!"

"Even Now Have I Laid by
Skins . . . That I Might Marry
Zarinska . . . Even Now Are Her
Snowshoes Bound to Her Feet,
Ready to Break Trail for
the Dogs of the Wolf"

The old man drew his furs about him with crude consciousness of his royalty, but delayed reply while a youngster crept in, delivered a quick message to appear before the council, and was gone.

"O White Man, whom we have named Moose-Killer, also known as the Wolf, and the Son of the Wolf! We know thou comest of a mighty race; we are proud to have thee our *potlatch*-guest; but the king-salmon does not mate with the dog-salmon, nor the Raven with the Wolf."

"Not so!" cried Mackenzie. "The daughters of the Raven have I met in the camps of the Wolf,—the squaw of Mortimer, the squaw of Tregidgo, the squaw of Barnaby, who came two ice-runs back, and I have heard of other squaws, though my eyes beheld them not."

"Son, your words are true; but it were evil mating, like water with the sand, like the snowflake with the sun. But met you one Mason and his squaw? No? He came ten ice-runs ago,—the first of all the Wolves. And with him there was a mighty man, straight as a willow-shoot, and tall; strong as the bald-faced grizzly, with a heart like the full summer moon; his—"

"Oh!" interrupted Mackenzie, recognizing the well-known Northland figure,—"Malemute Kid!"

"The same,—a mighty man. But saw you aught of the squaw? She was full sister to Zarinska."

"Nay, Chief; but I have heard. Mason—far, far to the north, a spruce-tree, heavy with years, crushed out his life beneath. But his love was great, and he had much gold. With this, and her boy, she journeyed countless sleeps toward the winter's noonday sun, and there she yet lives,—no biting frost, no snow, no summer's midnight sun, no winter's noonday night."

A second messenger interrupted with imperative summons from the council. As Mackenzie threw him into the snow, he caught a glimpse of the swaying

forms before the council-fire, heard the deep basses of the men in rhythmic chant, and knew the Shaman was fanning the anger of his people. Time pressed. He turned upon the chief.

"Come! I wish thy child. And now. See! Here are tobacco, tea, many cups of sugar, warm blankets, handkerchiefs, both good and large; and here, a true rifle, with many bullets and much powder."

"Nay," replied the old man, struggling against the great wealth spread before him. "Even now are my people come together. They will not have this marriage."

"But thou art chief."

"Yet do my young men rage because the Wolves have taken their maidens so that they may not marry."

"Listen, O Thling-Tinneh! Ere the night has passed into the day, the Wolf shall face his dogs to the mountains of the East and fare forth to the Country of the Yukon. And Zarinska shall break trail for his dogs."

"And ere the night has gained its middle, my young men may fling to the dogs the flesh of the Wolf, and his bones be scattered in the snow till the springtime lay them bare."

It was threat and counter-threat. Mackenzie's bronzed face flushed darkly. He raised his voice. The old squaw, who till now had sat an impassive spectator, made to creep by him for the door. The song of the men broke suddenly, and there was a hubbub of many voices as he whirled the old woman roughly to her couch of skins.

"Again I cry—listen, O Thling-Tinneh! The Wolf dies with teeth fast-locked, and with him there shall sleep ten of thy strongest men,—men who are needed, for the hunting is but begun, and the fishing is not many moons away. And again, of what profit should I die? I know the custom of thy people; thy share of

my wealth shall be very small. Grant me thy child, and it shall all be thine. And yet again, my brothers will come, and they are many, and their maws are never filled; and the daughters of the Raven shall bear children in the lodges of the Wolf. My people are greater than thy people. It is destiny. Grant, and all this wealth is thine."

Moccasins were crunching the snow without. Mackenzie threw his rifle to cock, and loosened the twin Colts in his belt.

"Grant, O Chief!"

"And yet will my people say no."

"Grant, and the wealth is thine. Then shall I deal with thy people after."

"The Wolf will have it so. I will take his tokens,—but I would warn him."

Mackenzie passed over the goods, taking care to clog the rifle's ejector, and capping the bargain with a kaleidoscopic silk kerchief. The Shaman and half a dozen young braves entered, but he shouldered boldly among them and passed out.

"Pack!" was his laconic greeting to Zarinska as he passed her lodge and hurried to harness his dogs. A few minutes later he swept into the council at the head of the team, the woman by his side. He took his place at the upper end of the oblong, by the side of the chief. To his left, a step to the rear, he stationed Zarinska,—her proper place. Besides the time was ripe for mischief, and there was need to guard his back.

On either side the men crouched to the fire, their voices lifted in a folk-chant out of the forgotten past. Full of strange, halting cadences and haunting recurrences, it was not beautiful. "Fearful" may inadequately express it. At the lower end, under the eye of the Shaman, danced half a score of women. Stern were his reproofs to those who did not wholly abandon

themselves to the ecstasy of the rite. Half hidden in their heavy masses of raven hair, all disheveled and falling to their waists, they slowly swayed to and fro, their forms rippling to an ever-changing rhythm.

It was a weird scene; an anachronism. To the south, the nineteenth century was reeling off the few years of its last decade; here flourished man primeval, a shade removed from the prehistoric cave-dweller, a forgotten fragment of the Elder World. The tawny wolf-dogs sat between their skin-clad masters or fought for room, the firelight cast backward from their red eyes and slavered fangs. The woods, in ghostly shroud, slept on unheeding. The White Silence, for the moment driven to the rimming forest, seemed ever crushing inward; the stars danced with great leaps, as is their wont in the time of the Great Cold; while the Spirits of the Pole trailed their robes of glory athwart the heavens.

Scruff Mackenzie dimly realized the wild grandeur of the setting as his eyes ranged down the fur-fringed sides in quest of missing faces. They rested for a moment on a newborn babe, suckling at its mother's naked breast. It was forty below,—seventy and odd degrees of frost. He thought of the tender women of his own race, and smiled grimly. Yet from the loins of some such tender woman had he sprung with a kingly inheritance,—an inheritance which gave to him and his dominance over the land and sea, over the animals and the peoples of all the zones. Single-handed against fivescore, girt by the arctic winter, far from his own, he felt the promptings of his heritage, the desire to possess, the wild danger-love, the thrill of battle, the power to conquer or to die.

The singing and the dancing ceased, and the Shaman flared up in rude eloquence. Through the sinuousities of their vast mythology, he worked cun-

ningly upon the credulity of his people. The case was strong. Opposing the creative principles as embodied in the Crow and the Raven, he stigmatized Mackenzie as the Wolf, the fighting and the destructive principle. Not only was the combat of these forces spiritual, but men fought, each to his totem. They were the children of Jelchs, the Raven, the Promethean fire-bringer; Mackenzie was the child of the Wolf, or, in other words, the Devil. For them to bring a truce to this perpetual warfare, to marry their daughters to the arch-enemy, were treason and blasphemy of the highest order. No phrase was harsh, nor figure vile, enough in branding Mackenzie as a sneaking interloper and emissary of Satan. There was a subdued, savage roar in the deep chests of his listeners as he took the swing of his peroration.

"Ay, my brothers, Jelchs is all-powerful! Did he not bring heaven-born fire that we might be warm? Did he not draw the sun, moon, and stars from their holes that we might see? Did he not teach us that we might fight the Spirits of Famine and of Frost? But now Jelchs is angry with his children, and they are grown to a handful, and he will not help. For they have forgotten him, and done evil things, and trod bad trails, and taken his enemies into their lodges to sit by their fires. And the Raven is sorrowful at the wickedness of his children; but when they shall rise up and show they have come back, he will come out of the darkness to aid them. O brothers! the Fire-Bringer has whispered messages to thy Shaman; the same shall ye hear. Let the young men take the young women to their lodges; let them fly at the throat of the Wolf; let them be undying in their enmity! Then shall their women become fruitful, and they shall multiply into a mighty people! And the Raven shall lead great tribes of their fathers and their fathers' fathers from

out of the North; and they shall beat back the Wolves till they are as last year's camp-fires; and they shall again come to rule over all the land! 'Tis the message of Jelchs, the Raven."

This foreshadowing of the Messiah's coming brought a hoarse howl from the Sticks as they leaped to their feet. Mackenzie slipped the thumbs of his mittens, and waited. There was a clamor for the Fox, not to be stilled till one of the young men stepped forward to speak.

"Brothers! The Shaman has spoken wisely. The Wolves have taken our women, and our men are childless. We are grown to a handful. The Wolves have taken our warm furs, and given for them evil spirits which dwell in bottles, and clothes which come not from the beaver or the lynx, but are made from the grass. And they are not warm, and our men die of strange sicknesses. I, the Fox, have taken no woman to wife; and why? Twice have the maidens which pleased me gone to the camps of the Wolf. Even now have I laid by skins of the beaver, of the moose, of the cariboo, that I might win favor in the eyes of Thling-Tinneh, that I might marry Zarinska, his daughter. Even now are her snowshoes bound to her feet, ready to break trail for the dogs of the Wolf. Nor do I speak for myself alone. As I have done, so has the Bear. He, too, had fain been the father of her children, and many skins has he cured thereto. I speak for all the young men who know not wives. The Wolves are ever hungry. Always do they take the choice meat at the killing. To the Ravens are left the leavings.

"There is Gugkla!" he cried, brutally pointing out one of the women, who was a cripple. "Her legs are bent like the ribs of a birch canoe. She cannot gather wood nor carry the meat of the hunters. Did the Wolves choose her?"

"Ai! ai!" vociferated his tribesmen.

"There is Moyri, whose eyes are crossed by the Evil Spirit. Even the babes are affrighted when they gaze upon her, and it is said the bald-face gives her the trail. Was she chosen?"

Again the cruel applause rang out.

"And there sits Pischet. She does not hearken to my words. Never has she heard the cry of the chit-chat, the voice of her husband, the babble of her child. She lives in the White Silence. Cared the Wolves aught for her? No! Theirs is the choice of the kill; ours is the leavings.

"Brothers, it shall not be! No more shall the Wolves slink among our camp-fires. The time is come."

A great streamer of fire, the aurora borealis, purple, green, and yellow, shot across the zenith, bridging horizon to horizon. With head thrown back and arms extended he swayed to his climax.

"Behold! The spirits of our fathers have arisen and great deeds are afoot this night!"

He stepped back, and another young man somewhat diffidently came forward, pushed on by his comrades. He towered a full head above them, his broad chest defiantly bared to the frost. He swung tentatively from one foot to the other. Words halted upon his tongue, and he was ill at ease. His face was horrible to look upon, for it had at one time been half torn away by some terrific blow. At last he struck his breast with his clenched fist, drawing sound as from a drum, and his voice rumbled forth as the surf from an ocean cavern.

"I am the Bear,—the Silver-Tip and the Son of the Silver-Tip! When my voice was yet as a girl's, I slew the lynx, the moose, and the cariboo; when it whistled like the wolverines from under a cache, I crossed the Mountains of the South and slew three of the White

Rivers; when it became as the roar of the Chinook, I met the bald-grizzly, but gave no trail."

At this he paused, his hand significantly sweeping across his hideous scars.

"I am not as the Fox. My tongue is frozen like the river. I cannot make great talk. My words are few. The Fox says great deeds are afoot this night. Good. Talk flows from his tongue like the freshets of the spring, but he is chary of deeds. This night shall I do battle with the Wolf. I shall slay him, and Zarinska shall sit by my fire. The Bear has spoken."

Though pandemonium raged about him, Scruff Mackenzie held his ground. Aware how useless was the rifle at close quarters, he slipped both holsters to the fore, ready for action, and drew his mittens till his hands were barely shielded by the elbow gauntlets. He knew there was no hope in attack *en masse*, but true to his boast, was prepared to die with teeth fast-locked. But the Bear restrained his comrades, beating back the more impetuous with his terrible fist. As the tumult began to die away, Mackenzie shot a glance in the direction of Zarinska. It was a superb picture. She was leaning forward on her snowshoes, lips apart and nostrils quivering, like a tigress about to spring. Her great black eyes were fixed upon her tribesmen, in fear and in defiance. So extreme the tension, she had forgotten to breathe. With one hand pressed spasmodically against her breast and the other as tightly gripped about the dogwhip, she was as turned to stone. Even as he looked, relief came to her. Her muscles loosened; with a heavy sigh she settled back, giving him a look of more than love.

Thling-Tinneh was trying to speak, but his people drowned his voice. The Mackenzie strode forward. The Fox opened his mouth to a piercing yell, but so savagely did Mackenzie whirl upon him that he shrank

back, his larnyx all a-gurgle with suppressed sound. His discomfiture was greeted with roars of laughter, and served to soothe his fellows to a listening mood.

"Brothers! The White Man, whom ye have chosen to call the Wolf, came among you with fair words. He was not like the Innuit; he spoke not lies. He came as a friend, as one who would be a brother. But your men have had their say, and the time for soft words is past. First, I will tell you that the Shaman has an evil tongue and is a false prophet, that the messages he spake are not those of the Fire-Bringer. His ears are locked to the voice of the Raven, and out of his own head he weaves cunning fancies, and he has made fools of you. He has no power. When the dogs were killed and eaten, and your stomachs were heavy with untanned hide and strips of moccasins; when the old men died, and the old women died, and the babes at the dry dugs of the mothers died; when the land was dark, and ye perished as do the salmon in the fall; ay, when the famine was upon you, did the Shaman bring reward to your hunters? Did the Shaman put meat in your bellies? Again I say, the Shaman is without power. Thus! I spit upon his face!"

Though taken aback by the sacrilege, there was no uproar. Some of the women were even frightened, but among the men there was an uplifting as though in preparation or anticipation of the miracle. All eyes were turned upon the two central figures. The priest realized the crucial moment, felt his power tottering, opened his mouth in denunciation, but fled backward before the truculent advance, upraised fist, and flashing eyes of Mackenzie. He sneered and resumed.

"Was I stricken dead? Did the lightning burn me? Did the stars fall from the skies and crush me? Pish! I have done with the dog. Now will I tell you of my people, who are the mightiest of all the peoples, who

rule in all the lands. At first we hunt as I hunt, alone. After that we hunt in packs; and at last, like the cariboo-run, we sweep across all the land. Those whom we take into our lodges live; those who will not come die. Zarinska is a comely maiden, full and strong, fit to become the mother of Wolves. Though I die, such shall she become; for my brothers are many, and they will follow the scent of my dogs. Listen to the Law of the Wolf: *Whoso taketh the life of one Wolf, the forfeit shall ten of his people pay.* In many lands has the price been paid; in many lands shall it yet be paid.

"Now will I deal with the Fox and the Bear. It seems they have cast eyes upon the maiden. So? Behold, I have bought her! Thling-Tinneh leans upon the rifle; the goods of purchase are by his fire. Yet will I be fair to the young men. To the Fox, whose tongue is dry with many words, will I give of tobacco five long plugs. Thus will his mouth be wetted that he may make much noise in the council. But to the Bear, of whom I am well proud, will I give of blankets two; of flour, twenty cups; of tobacco, double that of the Fox; and if he fare with me over the Mountains of the East, then will I give him a rifle, mate to Thling-Tinneh's. If not? Good! The Wolf is weary of speech. Yet once again will he say the Law: *Whoso taketh the life of one Wolf, the forfeit shall ten of his people pay.*"

Mackenzie smiled as he stepped back to his old position, but at heart he was full of trouble. The night was yet dark. The girl came to his side, and he listened closely as she told of the Bear's battle-tricks with the knife.

The decision was for war. In a trice, scores of moccasins were widening the space of beaten snow by the fire. There was much chatter about the seeming defeat of the Shaman; some averred that he had but withheld

his power, while others conned past events and agreed with the Wolf. The Bear came to the center of the battle-ground, a long naked hunting-knife of Russian make in his hand. The Fox called attention to Mackenzie's revolvers; so he stripped his belt, buckling it about Zarinska, into whose hands he also intrusted his rifle. She shook her head that she could not shoot,—small chance had a woman to handle such precious things.

"Then, if danger comes by my back, cry aloud, 'My husband!' No; thus, 'My husband!'"

He laughed as she repeated it, pinched her cheek and re-entered the circle. Not only in reach and stature had the Bear the advantage of him, but his blade was longer by a good two inches. Scruff Mackenzie had looked into the eyes of men before, and he knew it was a man who stood against him; yet he quickened to the glint of light on the steel, to the dominant pulse of his race.

Time and again he was forced to the edge of the fire or the deep snow, and time and again, with the foot tactics of the pugilist, he worked back to the center. Not a voice was lifted in encouragement, while his antagonist was heartened with applause, suggestions and warnings. But his teeth only shut the tighter as the knives clashed together, and he thrust or eluded with a coolness born of conscious strength. At first he felt compassion for his enemy; but this fled before the primal instinct of life, which in turn gave way to the lust of slaughter. The ten thousand years of culture fell from him, and he was a cave-dweller, doing battle for his female.

Twice he pricked the Bear, getting away unscathed; but the third time caught, and to save himself, free hands closed on fighting hands, and they came together. Then did he realize the tremendous strength of his

opponent. His muscles were knotted in painful lumps, and cords and tendons threatened to snap with the strain; yet nearer and nearer came the Russian steel. He tried to break away, but only weakened himself. The fur-clad circle closed in, certain of and anxious to see the final stroke. But with wrestler's trick, swinging partly to the side, he struck at his adversary with his head. Involuntarily the Bear leaned back, disturbing his center of gravity. Simultaneous with this, Mackenzie tripped properly and threw his whole weight forward, hurling him clear through the circle into the deep snow. The Bear floundered out and came back full tilt.

"O my husband!" Zarinska's voice rang out, vibrant with danger.

To the twang of a bow-string, Mackenzie swept low to the ground, and a bone-barbed arrow passed over him into the breast of the Bear, whose momentum carried him over his crouching foe. The next instant Mackenzie was up and about. The Bear lay motionless, but across the fire was the Shaman, drawing a second arrow.

Mackenzie's knife leaped short in the air. He caught the heavy blade by the point. There was a flash of light as it spanned the fire. Then the Shaman, the hilt alone appearing without his throat, swayed a moment and pitched forward into the glowing embers.

Click! click!—the Fox had possessed himself of Thling-Tinneh's rifle and was vainly trying to throw a shell into place. But he dropped it at the sound of Mackenzie's laughter.

"So the Fox has not learned the way of the plaything? He is yet a woman. Come! Bring it, that I may show thee!"

The Fox hesitated.

"Come, I say!"

He slouched forward like a beaten cur.

"Thus, and thus; so the thing is done." A shell flew into place and the trigger was at cock as Mackenzie brought it to shoulder.

"The Fox has said great deeds were afoot this night, and he spoke true. There have been great deeds, yet least among them were those of the Fox. Is he still intent to take Zarinska to his lodge? Is he minded to tread the trail already broken by Shaman and the Bear? No? Good!"

Mackenzie turned contemptuously and drew his knife from the priest's throat.

"Are any of the young men so minded? If so, the Wolf will take them by two and three till none are left. No? Good! Thling-Tinneh, I now give thee this rifle a second time. If in the days to come thou shouldst journey to the Country of the Yukon, know thou that there shall always be a place and much food by the fire of the Wolf. The night is now passing into the day. I go, but I may come again. And for the last time, remember the Law of the Wolf!"

He was supernatural in their sight as he rejoined Zarinska. She took her place at the head of the team, and the dogs swung into motion. A few moments later they were swallowed up by the ghostly forest. Till now Mackenzie had waited; he slipped into his snowshoes to follow.

"Has the Wolf forgotten the five long plugs?"

Mackenzie turned upon the Fox angrily; then the humor of it struck him.

"I will give thee one short plug."

"As the Wolf sees fit," meekly responded the Fox, stretching out his hand.

THE PHANTOM COACH

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HESTER A. DICKINSON

THE PHANTOM COACH

WE HAD been three years absent from America, loitering here and there, as inclination prompted and ample leisure allowed, until, with a feeling of homesickness strong upon us, we turned our faces homeward, crossed over from India to Hongkong and took passage on the Mitsu Bishi steamer *Hiroshima Maru* for Yokohama, three weeks' sail from the Golden Gate.

Jack Erle, the poet of our party, had fallen in down below with a quiet, pale-faced New Englander whom he had met in India, and the first morning out he brought him up to become one of us, as he did straightway.

We all liked him immensely from the first. He was of fine presence, six feet high, well built and well mannered, witty and intelligent. He was, however, apparently wanting in energy and inclined to cynicism. These seeming defects we at once attributed to the enervating influence of life in the Orient and thought no more about them. He interested us hours at a time with quietly told stories of his travels, for he had seen not only the places we had visited, but scores of others yet unknown to us.

But Maurice Wilson, for so I will call him, had also the pathetic smile and the appealing blue eyes that all unmeaningly make willing fools of women,

> Who never can know
> And never can understand

that the language of such is impersonal and born of blood, not heart.

Yet Wilson had a heart, and a tender one, and some way, as the days went by, the feeling grew upon one

of us, at least, that he could tell us a story, if he so minded, of personal sacrifice and pain in some Gethsemane of which the world knew not.

* * * * * * * *

While still in the Yellow Sea the glass changed suddenly one morning, and in less than two hours the order "All passengers below!" was heard above the shrieking of the wind and that low, almost human, groaning of a ship's strained joints when the typhoon's breath first touches it. For hours we were tossed helplessly about the cabin, the sharp cries of the second-class passengers coming to us now and then from the prison under the hatches, and mingling with the moans of women whom we vainly tried to comfort.

I can see now the look in Wilson's eyes as, when once again we were on deck, he said solemnly:

"That was a loud call, seems to me, and down there," nodding toward the cabin, "down there in such an hour one thinks rapidly. N'est ce pas? And with a mighty tug at his heart and something in his throat like a knife thrust through he wishes—wishes—that he had been a better boy."

Somehow after the storm things seemed not quite the same again. Unrest was everywhere. We who were favored haunted the captain's room, listened to his yarns, drank sparingly of his wine and freely of his cheer. Yet a cloud no larger than a man's hand perhaps, and yet large enough to cast a shadow, seemed hanging over the ship, affecting officers, passengers and crew alike, gainsay it as we might.

Everyone was brightened visibly by the half day's stay at Nagasaki, and in the excitement of the trip through the inland sea the typhoon was forgotten, and we became quite our usual selves again, all except Wilson, who still seemed restless and ill at ease.

"When are we due at Kobe?" he asked after tiffin was over and we were all in the captain's room, as usual, when he was off duty.

"About dark," the captain replied absently, adding after a moment's pause, "and—well, I've slowed up a bit so we can get a look at the phantom coach, you know."

"The phantom coach!" echoed Jack. "What is that?"

"Never heard of it? No? It's a queer story, and I'm bound to find out for myself if there's any truth in it. Haven't happened along here at the right time since the ghost first put in an appearance. It shows up only at dusk, they say."

"Tell us the story, captain, do!"

"All right," he said, and, lighting a fresh cigar and swinging himself around in his chair so that he faced the low hills covered with frosty tea plants, he began the tale of the phantom coach.

"You all remember, no doubt," he said, "how the British ship *Bombay* ran into the United States corvet *Oneida* in the harbor of Yokohama January 24, 1870, causing the loss of the *Oneida* and the lives of one hundred and twelve of her men. Years later, the story goes, a son of one of the officers who went down with the ship came over from your country just to see the place where his father died, he said, and the land of which he had heard such fairy tales. I shall call him Brown, but that wasn't his name. You may be his cousins for aught I know, with a certain prejudice against geishas.

"He was a splendid fellow, everybody affirmed, of the finest New England stock. Rich, handsome, affable and 'a very dear,' the ladies said."

I thought I heard a moan from over where Wilson sat, but no doubt it was a delusion, for when I glanced

at him he was sitting quietly, his cheroot between his fingers and his eyes upon the shore line, half a mile away.

"He spent a few months traveling over Japan," the captain resumed, "and then—then the usual thing happened. He fell in love with a geisha whom he met in a chaja, or teahouse, up by the famous waterfall in Kobe, and made her his wife,—in the usual way, of course—but she had faith in it, poor soul, as most of the geishas have. He found a home for her, or made it, rather, of what had once been a yadoya, or inn, a place hidden away in a hollow among the pines and so exquisite, so beautiful within and without as to seem the abode of fairies. He gave her a score of servants, dozens of the finest crepe kimonos, everything luxurious, in fact, that a woman loves the world over, no matter what her race.

"And so, lulled by the faint music of a hundred temple bells and happy with her teishiu (husband), little Orookson lived her year of wedded life. They say it was beautiful, the light in her lovely face when she met him in the doma when he came, and that wonderful to listen to was the music of her voice when she hung upon his arm, saying softly, 'Teishiu, teishiu!' he smiling down upon her as only he knew how to smile.

"Everybody in Kobe knew them well by sight, and she was the envy of every woman because of her coach and ponies, which had been brought over from the States for her especial use. Ponies were scarce in Japan, you know, and (as for coaches—well) jinrikshas served often for even the nobility.

"Their favorite drive was to the spot where for years since, in the dusk of warm eves, has been seen the phantom coach—ghost, it is said, of that which was Orookson's pride."

"Did he love her?" I ventured to ask.

The captain took a few long whiffs of his cigar, and the stillness grew oppressive.

"Y-e-s," he said musingly, "in a way, you understand. She loved him, at any rate, and—"

"And he her! I swear it by the Eternal!"

We all turned to look at Wilson. He had risen suddenly and crossed to the window, where he stood with his back toward us for fully a long minute, while no one spoke or moved. Then he turned upon us a face that was drawn and white and saying, in a voice so low that we bent our heads to listen, "One should not judge where he cannot know," resumed his seat quietly and relighted his cheroot.

"You are right," replied the captain. "But this man, if he loved at all, loved and rode away or sailed away, which is one and the same thing, and he never came back, though he left in its cradle the boy that came to them but a month before he went away. He left plenty of money for them, however, with the United States consul at Kobe, so she stayed home with the boy, and, growing paler day by day and often praying behind the shoji of her tokonoma, waited for the 'music feet' of her teishiu. Sometimes, though rarely, she drove with her boy and his ahma to the old place on the beach, but the sea made her sad, she said. Oh, it's an old, old story in Japan!"

"Yes, but the phantom coach, captain?"

"Oh, well, from one of those drives little Orookson never returned to the house among the pines. No one knows how it happened, but coach, coachman, geisha and child went into the sea together. The nurse, who alone escaped, said the ponies were frightened and that her mistress held her baby high over her head as the coach went down and cried with an awful cry, 'Teishiu, teishiu!' Her heart was broken, the ahma said. It was well she was not to suffer any more."

A loud thud startled us, and we all rushed to the rescue of Wilson. He lay in a tumbled heap where he had fallen, and for a while we thought him dead. The captain's brandy brought him round, however, and we helped him to his stateroom, laughing at his quaint remarks about "that infernal climate" that had made a woman of him. He wished to be left alone, he said. He needed nothing and would take a siesta. Guessed "the typhoon had shook him up too much," and so on.

The afternoon waned, and the dusk crept down from the hills and out upon the sea. The ship slowed up under orders until as we reached Phantom Point she was barely creeping. We were all on deck, watching the shore line eagerly, though none of us expected to see anything unusual. Oh, no! Wilson, still pale and trembling a little, I fancied, stood leaning over the rail, his eyes strained out through the half dusk and that wonderful smile of his playing at hide and seek among the shadows about his perfect mouth.

"I've had such a jolly time with you boys," he said quietly, slipping his arm through Jack's and beaming upon us all. "It's been quite as if I were in my own land. Strange? Yet, after all, it is blessed to go home!"

"Look! Look!" whispered Jack.

And, sure enough, facing the sea, but plainly seen against the evening sky, stood ponies, mother and babe, half covered by clouds of mist, yet half revealed to our wondering gaze.

"The phantom coach!" cried the captain. "Look!"

"The phantom coach!" echoed every one on deck. We saw it, however, but a moment, for with a wild cry of "My wife, my child!" a cry that must have entered heaven itself, Wilson leaped the rail and disappeared under the waves that closed forever above him.

Every effort was made to save him, but in vain, and no trace of his body was ever found. In his stateroom a note addressed to the captain read as follows:

"I hope to make amends, but if tonight I see the phantom coach I shall know it is too late. Pray for my soul."

* * * * * * * * *

I am told that from that day the phantom coach has not again been seen. The dead are satisfied.

THE CROOKED PINE

ELIZABETH GRISWOLD ROWE

THE CROOKED PINE

The old woman threw a piece of green-painted wreckage on the open fire, and turned the wick of the coal-oil lamp higher for the little teacher.

"I'm afraid it will be lonely for you these stormy nights," she began.

The girl opened a volume of Stevenson before she replied:

"Not if I have plenty to read."

It was Mary Drew's first year in the quiet coast town—in fact, her first year out of college; and her evenings with the queer old woman with whom she boarded would have been lonely enough had it not been for her keen enjoyment of books.

Mrs. Carey looked out of the window toward the west where the Pacific pounded on the rocks, a stone's throw away; but her eyes could not penetrate the thick blackness which hung over the water. She was small and bent in her gray print dress, with the little plaid shawl folded neatly three-cornerwise about her thin shoulders; but there was no hint of weakness there. Her skin was lined and cross-lined; yet still her furrowed cheeks showed color, and her strong old hands were quick and capable. She stood for a moment, watching the sheets of rain streaming down the glass, and listening to the swish of the storm against the crooked pine tree, just outside. Then she sat down in front of the fire and stared into the flames with faded old eyes.

A noise above the clamor of the storm startled them; the old woman crept to the window and listened, with gray head bent forward and her hand to her ear.

"Doesn't it sound to you like someone tapping?"

she whispered, as if afraid of her own voice. "I've heard it before when I've lain awake in bed."

Mary raised the shutter and stood straight and fearless beside the other, a slender, white-waisted figure outlined against the darkness.

"I think it is a branch of the pine tree against the roof," she reassured her companion.

"It may be, it may be," answered the old woman. "My husband planted that tree when we first bought the place. He dug up a sapling in the woods and carried it home. It was straight and strong then, but the steady wind from the ocean has made it crooked. I was always sorry it grew so twisted and gnarled."

She stopped abruptly and, crossing the room, nervously piled more scraps of driftwood on the fire. Mary went back to her reading, but she could see that the old woman was uneasy. She watched her wander around the house, trying to stop with wedges the rattle of loose windows, listening to a gate which grated dismally on its hinges, peering ever and again out of the black windows into the baffling darkness beyond.

"Do storms always make you uneasy?" asked Mary, curiously, for she could not help wondering why the old woman roamed like a restless spirit.

"It isn't the storm alone," answered the other. "It's the night. You know this is All-Saints' Night."

"Yes, Hallowe'en," Mary replied.

The old woman sank down in a rocker which creaked with her nervous movements as she swayed back and forth.

"It's seventeen years ago tonight since my boy died," she said, abruptly.

The girl's voice was sympathetic.

"I heard that you had lost a son many years ago."

The woman shook her gray head, and went on as if to herself:

"His death was strange—very strange."

"Tell me how it happened," said the girl.

"I don't—think—I'd better," hesitated the other. "I thought some of the neighbors might—have talked to you about it."

"Nobody has. Wouldn't you like to tell me?"

"If you would care to hear," she answered. "I haven't spoken about it for years but I can't help thinking of Sammie tonight. There is something I've never told anyone before."

The girl closed her book and came over to the fireplace, where she seated herself and watched the orange-colored flames licking the broken, seaworn boards; now they changed to blue, shading into green, and back again to orange. The two women were outside the circle of light cast by the lamp, and sat in the flickering gleam of the fire, which cast weird, uneasy shadows past the two figures.

"You know the Chinese burying-ground near here?" continued Mrs. Carey.

"Yes, I've been through it. I never before saw such a queer place, with its strings of paper prayers to appease the evil spirits."

"That's where we found him."

"Your boy? How dreadful!" the girl cried, turning kind, sympathetic eyes toward the old woman. "How did it happen?"

The mother rocked in her creaking chair as she spoke:

"Sammie was only fifteen, and a bit wild, with his father at sea most of the time, and me too easy with him. Poor boy! He was never very strong either."

She paused for a moment, her mind busy with the past. Then she resumed:

"He went with two or three others older than himself, who were regular daredevils. They were up to

all kinds of mischief. One thing they did was to torment Chinamen. Like a dog after cats, boys delight in teasing Chinamen. I don't know why."

"I know how it is," Mary said, as the other paused.

"They used to fling stones and hoot at one old man in particular, who was half crazy from taking opium. I don't know what his name was. Everybody called him 'Old Chair-Fix.' He always carried a long pole with a wooden chair-seat dangling from it and shuffled around the town and country, getting chairs to repair. You never could understand anything he said except 'Chair fix,' and he acted queer, so that children were afraid of him. When the boys hooted at him he'd get angry, and would sometimes chase them, with his long, bony fingers outstretched.

"One day, he came to complain about Sammie. At least, that's what I supposed he came for. I was sitting in this room doing a bit of mending when I heard a tap-tap right on that front window. I looked up quickly, and there was a skinny, yellow hand against the glass. The nails were like claws."

"Were you all alone?" asked Mary, glancing at the window in front of which the old woman had listened so apprehensively.

"Yes, and I was too frightened to open the door. I crept out into the next room and waited until he finally went away. After that, I was in constant fear of his coming back; and many a time I imagined I heard that sharp tapping on the window-pane.

"One day the old man was run over by the train on the curve near Chinatown. People thought he must have been too drunk with opium to get out of the way. I couldn't help feeling a little relieved when I heard he was dead. He was buried in the Chinese cemetery on the last day of October. That night, Sammie was out with the boys for their Hallowe'en pranks. About

midnight, when they were coming home, they passed the gate of the cemetery. You know it isn't very far from here."

She paused and glanced over her shoulder with a shudder.

"The boys said they were talking about the old Chinaman, when one of them dared Sammie to go through the graveyard alone and call 'Chair Fix.' He was to meet them on the railroad track at the far end. Sammie took their dare."

"What a cruel thing to do!" exclaimed the girl.

"Cruel!" cried the mother. "You don't know how cruel! Oh, why did they do it?"

Then, controlling herself, she continued:

"The boys waited and waited, and whistled and called, but Sammie didn't appear. They were frightened, but they said afterwards that they made up their minds that his courage had failed him, and that he had crept out of the same gate and had run home after they were out of sight."

"And you found him there?" whispered the girl.

"Yes, but not till morning," answered the other. "I waited until past midnight for him to come home; then I began to get frightened. I walked down to the gate and waited and listened; I paced up and down the road in front of our place. It wasn't stormy like this, but it was a gray night—there was just enough light so you could make out things."

"How did you know where to look?"

"I didn't. I called him, and I walked past some of the neighbors' houses, but they were dark and quiet. I thought of the ocean, and wondered if he might possibly have been climbing around on the rocks and slipped and hurt himself. I walked out to them and along the beach, calling, calling. I tried to make myself believe that he had gone home with one of the boys to

stay all night; but I couldn't go to bed. I had a feeling that something was wrong. If I had only known!"

Her gnarled hands were clasped convulsively.

"As soon as day broke, I hurried to the home of a boy who often went with Sammie. He told me nothing except that they had parted at midnight, and he hadn't seen him since. Then I went on to another place; and this boy looked so frightened when I asked for Sammie that I suspected he knew something. He wouldn't tell at first, but his father made him; and little by little, I learned what had happened."

A fiercer gust shook the weather-beaten house, and she suddenly straightened up in her low chair and listened, with apprehensive eyes turned toward the front window. Hearing nothing, she sank back and went on:

"We ran through the graveyard, hunting everywhere, and calling for my poor boy. We finally came upon a freshly turned mound; and then it came to me all at once that this was the grave of old 'Chair-Fix.' A sickening fear seized me. My knees were so weak I could hardly stand, and I felt as if I couldn't go a step farther. But we went on searching, and just beyond—we found him. His face was terrible to look at. It was convulsed—as if he had seen something."

The old woman buried her face in her hands; the girl tried to comfort her. It was some time before she could finish her story.

"The doctors said he died of heart disease. He'd had a weak heart for years; I knew that. But there was something else they couldn't explain."

She shivered and drew her little three-cornered shawl tighter about her shoulders. Then she saw the darkening embers, and, leaning over, she coaxed them to flame with fragments of a gnarled root that waited its turn in the box.

"What was it?" urged the other, fearing to hear, yet anxious to know the end.

"There was a curious wound on his neck which could not be accounted for. It was a discolored mark, as if the skin had been bruised, but not broken."

The old woman shivered, and finished in a whisper:

"I have never told anyone else. It looked to me as if the old man's fingers had reached my boy's throat."

Mary gazed with pity on the bent figure, huddled over the dying fire. She slipped her arm about the drooping shoulders and said:

"Don't you think all this might be explained in a perfectly natural way?"

"Nobody knows," answered the woman, shaking her gray head slowly. "I shall always believe that something happened we *can't* explain. I have never told anyone what I thought before; but it is so long ago—and you asked me."

They both started up as the pine tree scraped along the roof in the fierce wind. Mrs. Carey glanced up at the tall clock on the mantel, and moved to a little table in the corner on which two candles waited.

"It is almost twelve," she said. "I had no idea it was so late. You'd better hurry right up to bed. I did wrong to frighten you."

With uncertain fingers she struck a match and lit a candle, which she gave to Mary just as the tall clock began to strike the hour of twelve.

"I hope you'll sleep well," said the girl as she opened the stair door.

"I hope so. Perhaps I won't hear it tonight on account of the storm," the old woman muttered.

"Hear what?" asked Mary, pausing.

"Nothing." Mrs. Carey lit her own candle and tremulously put out the lamp. "Let's hurry out of this room. I didn't know it was so late!"

Suddenly she clutched Mary's skirts, and together, frozen with horror, they stood in the doorway. A sharp tapping at the front window fell on their strained ears. Once, twice, three times they heard it; then all was silent, except for the beating of the storm, and the scraping of the pine tree over the roof.

Still clinging to each other, with their wavering candles held high before their white faces, the two women crept softly up the dark stairs.

THE KIS KHILIM

FRANCES ORR ALLEN

THE KIS KHILIM

THE old Armenian drew his chair closer to the rude loom on which was stretched the bright Kurdistan rug he was mending. Through the little window the late afternoon sun shone full upon him, lighting up the thin black hair streaked with gray, and bringing into relief the deep lines in his dark-skinned face. It did not chase away his look of longing—the face was that of one to whom life was denying some of her sweet gifts.

The old man was so intent on matching the colors in the intricate pattern that he did not notice the gayly dressed child who had come into the room, until she stood beside him.

"More rugs at Cushman's, grandfather," she called, lightly touching his shoulder. "My! You'll make a lot of money."

"Eet ees days I weesh I haf nod come to thees country where everytheeng eet ees money," he answered sadly, reaching up for a darker shade of blue among the strands of wool hanging over the top of the loom.

"But isn't money a good thing?" Leaning forward, Anna thoughtfully stroked the rug.

Her grandfather tied the knot carefully before he replied. "I laike nod to do for money what eet ees nod een the heart to do—an' eet ees days I weesh I haf nod come."

"I should think you'd be glad." Anna looked down admiringly at her shining black shoes, and straightened the pink bows on either side of her head.

Her grandfather carefully selected another strand of the wool; this time, deep red. He did not answer. Anna was only ten, and she would not understand.

She did not remember the old life in Armenia—she did not even speak the old tongue.

"I heard father say," Anna traced a pattern in the rug with uncertain finger, "there was a Kis Khilim." She turned abruptly. "I do not like at all these old rugs you mend—I *might* like a Kis Khilim —it is such a funny name——"

"Eet ees a good name," interrupted her grandfather reprovingly, his dark eyes full upon her. "An' eet ees a beautiful theeng the wemen of my country do. They nod spen' the time foolish—dress an' all the time go. They maike the rugs an' the Keelems, an' they tell their thoughts een them."

He bent more closely over his work, his face almost touching the soft pile. He could not see the color of the threads now—there was a mist before his eyes. Sometime, perhaps, he would tell Anna about his Kis Khilim; not now; when she was older—perhaps.

He thought about it, again, the next morning, waiting unheeded at Cushman's busy entrance, where the harsh glitter of the electric lights always troubled him.

He would tell Anna—some day—he decided, and did not see the queer smile of the clerk who called him to the rear of the store, where Mr. Jones, the manager, stood ready to show him his work.

He liked the back of the store better than the front. Here, gleams of sunshine strayed through half-curtained windows to fall on rugs that lay in folded heaps.

"Considerable work for you," the manager pointed to an unopened bundle, "do your best."

With a touch of pride, the old man answered gravely: "I efer do my bes', eef the rug be good, or eef nod. All know I do hones' work. I am of the race Haik," and he turned to the pile beside him.

As he spread out the rugs, smoothing the nap with tender hands, he noted the firm texture, the soft wool,

"Gathering the Kis Khilim in
His Arms, He Caressed It. As He Looked,
Each Figure, Each Color Spoke to Him
in the Language He Knew so Well—
the Language of the
Weaver's Art"

and the beautiful coloring in the old designs. These were not modern rugs. These were the work of the weavers of the old times, when it took years to make one rug, but that one was a thing to be proud of—so beautiful—and would last many, many generations.

He, too, had helped to make the beautiful rugs—in the old country long ago. He had not forgotten how, as a little boy, he had loved to go with his father to hunt the roots and grasses with which to make the dyes. When he grew old enough, he was told the secret of the wonderful yellow which only his father made, and was shown just how to mix and stir the dye in the big pot over the fire in the yard. But the greatest fun was when they all went down to the stream to wash the sheep before the shearing.

It was the old Daghestan that made him think of the big tent where he used to help his mother weave her rugs; of her low singing as they worked; of how the wind would sometimes blow the flap of the tent, and the sound of it was like sweet music. He could almost feel the swish of the wind as it used to blow on his cheek. The life of those old times was better than the noise and hurry of this western land,—even now, Mr. Jones would be wondering what kept him so long.

He reached for the last piece in the pile—the Khilim—looking at it doubtfully. It could hardly be a Kis Khilim. In all the rugs he had mended, he had never found one.

Rising to his feet, he unfolded the hanging, feeling the smooth hard finish on both sides, then held it up to scan the tracery of open work. Something in the colors and designs thrilled him. How like the one his Maro, his dear bride had made! He drew his fingers through the fringe at each end, counting the knots; with trembling hands he held it up again to the light; he stared at it with wide-opened eyes as if it were a thing of life.

As he looked, each color, each figure, spoke to him in the language he knew so well, the language of the weaver's art. Suddenly gathering it in his arms, he caressed it, he buried his face in it, he cried out for joy, and held it close to his heart.

He did not know that the gentlemanly clerks watching him, nodded significantly, and laughed; the old man did not hear them. The years had rolled back for him.

He was far away, out of doors, and the sun was shining. Maro, his bride, was with him, and the world was young. The birds sang, because it was his wedding day, and the flowers bloomed. Under a pear tree fragrant with blossoms, he and Maro were looking at the Kis Khilim she had brought him, her wedding-rug. She was telling him the story she had woven in it; of how, long before they were betrothed, she had loved him, and as she worked on her dowry rug, after the custom of the girls of her village, she had woven in it her thoughts of him. Those stars were to show she was thinking of him, and that little tuft of wool she had put in to keep away misfortune from them both. The leaves were for the children who sang and played about her as she worked, and she made the leaves bright, because their songs were happy songs.

Her eyes had grown soft as she told him the secret of the rug, which no one had guessed,—the lock of her hair woven in the corner. It was only a little dark spot. No one else in the whole world knew about it, only they two, and it was to be their secret, always, and always.

Then it was the evening of his marriage. The wedding guests were dancing and making merry in the big room in his father's house, and this same Kis Khilim hung across the corner. Behind it sat the bride, and they talked to her, and she looked out at

them through the open work of the Khilim. Her eyes were never so bright before, her cheeks so red.

He was very glad when the god-father brought her out for the bride's dance. The merry guests made a big ring around her, while Maro, keeping time to the stately music, danced with slow and graceful steps.

After a little while she went back to her seat in the corner, but he was very happy, for she was his bride, and would be always in his home. Once, as he peered through the tiny holes in the Khilim, she spoke to him of their secret, and looked over to the corner where was the lock of her hair; but not one of all those standing near understood, although she spoke in clear sweet tones, as the birds sing at early morning.

As he listened, the burden of the years fell upon him, and he knew again he was an old man, lonely, poor, kneeling before a pile of rugs. But the *Khilim* was real. Raising it to the light, once more he looked through the open work, from which, many years before, his bride had smiled upon him.

He folded the rug lovingly, hugged it close to his side, and with the confident smile of a child, sought Mr. Jones. Holding out the rug for the manager's inspection, the old man explained:

"Thees, sir, ees ver' torn. The people, eet maybe they care nod for so poor a cloth. Eet ees ver' hard to men'—taike long time. Eet maybe they sell—I much laike to buy."

He half drew back at the scrutinizing gaze and the brusque answer.

"They wouldn't sell—it's an antique. A rare——"

"Thees no ante-ek," the rug mender interrupted, his eyes burning. "Thees nod feefty years old." Then pleadingly, "Maybe they sell?"

His entreaty was met by an indifferent dismissal. He hesitated, glanced into the unsympathetic face of

Mr. Jones, then turned dejectedly and walked slowly back to the pile of rugs. But he kept the Khilim under his arm, and carried it himself to the little room, and placed it where he could see it as he worked.

The rugs were soon mended, but the Khilim took a long time. The slender fingers wove in each stitch with loving care. He spent hours just looking at it,—sometimes whispering softly to it in the old tongue; but he told no one about it, not even Anna.

All the time as he worked, he dreaded the day it would be finished, for then he would have to give it up. It was all he had of his Maro,—no picture of her, not a scrap of writing—for she could not write —only this rug, which held her message to him, a message which he alone understood.

No one else could love this Khilim as he loved it. If only he might have it the few years he had to live! He wanted little, and he had little to make him happy. True, he had food, and clothes, and shelter, but what were these? Even though his son, and his son's wife, were kind to him, they did not understand. He lived in another world, the world in which this Khilim had been new.

The very day it was finished, Cushman's sent for it; so with one last look, with one last loving touch to the little dark spot where was woven his Maro's hair, he wrapped it carefully, that no one with curious eyes should see it and ask foolish questions.

He watched the man go down the street with the safely tied bundle, then turned from the window, and put away the loom. He was very tired, and all at once the room seemed dark; he would work no more that day.

Although he tried not to grieve, his heart was heavy until the next morning when a thought came to him. He was not old—only sixty-eight years, and he was

strong; he could earn enough money to buy back his rug! So when there was not work at Cushman's, he sought it elsewhere. But he took no one into his confidence, not even when, on counting his precious hoard, he found he had saved fifty dollars.

With the money was a treasured bit of paper, the ticket that had been tied to the rug; on it was the address of the Wentworths, the people who had his rug. He knew just how to get there, for although it was at the edge of the city, he had more than once walked past the place; so he had no trouble in finding his way to the big stone house. Holding himself very straight, he rang the bell, and waited patiently, his heart glad with hope.

He frowned as he heard the trim maid say, "Just a pedlar, or a beggar." He a beggar!

"Send him away," came a lady's answer.

But he would not go, and pleaded so earnestly to see Mrs. Wentworth, that the maid interceded for him, and presently her mistress came to the door, followed by a fair-haired girl of sixteen.

"Well, my man, what do you want?" the mother asked rather patronizingly.

"Eef you pleeze, ma'am, I am the man who men' your rugs." He pushed back the shabby black hat off his burning forehead. "Eet ees of the Kees Keelem I come."

"Yes, and what about it?" She spoke impatiently.

"I come to buy heem—the Keelem. See, I breeng money, much money." With shaking hands he laid the hard-earned savings on the seat near by.

He did not see the astonished look on the lady's face, as she answered, "But we don't wish to sell our rugs."

He looked up anxiously. "Eet ees only the leetle one, the leetle Keelem, I laike to buy. Eef the money,

eet ees nod enough, I earn more, I come again." His pleading eyes fell at her answer.

"No, we would not think of selling our rugs." She closed the door on the old man outside.

For a moment, he stood still, dazed and bewildered; then with dragging steps went down the path, out the big gate, all the time wondering. He had gone but a little way when he halted at the sound of a sweet voice calling after him, and turned to look into the pitying face of the young girl.

"You forgot your money. My mother sent me with it."

"The money, oh yes, I remember eet nod. Eet ees of my Kees Keelem I theenk, an' of my Maro." The sorrow of patient years was in his answer.

"But why do you wish our Kis Khilim?"

Their Kis Khilim? It was *his* Kis Khilim! His heart kept saying, but he answered evasively, "O, mees, eet ees the kin' laike the girls of my country, they maike. Each young girl, she try maike bes' rug in village. No one laike sell. They keep always, eef they can. Bud one man, he sell hees Keelem for feefty dollars—to pay debt when hees children seek—he love to be hones'. I work hard, I save feefty dollars—I theenk I buy thees Keelem. Feefty dollars too leetle?" He looked inquiringly into the girl's puzzled face.

"I don't think mother would sell it at any price," she answered regretfully.

His whole figure drooped; disappointment gave place to sadness; the light of hope died out in his eyes.

"But if we ever do," the girl's tone was full of sympathy, "we will let you know. Tell me where you live."

He regarded her gratefully, painfully spelling for her the queer name, and told her how to find him.

When she asked him to come some day, and tell her what he knew about rugs, his heart gave a quick throb—he would again see his Khilim! His voice was a bit unsteady with the hope of that joy.

"Eet maike me ver' happy, mees, to tell you of the Keelems."

After she had left him he turned to look back at the house which held his Khilim, and he saw the figure of the young girl, still standing—the young girl who had been sorry for him. Weary as he was when he reached his little room, he again thought of her, and how like she was to a sweet white rose that grew in his father's garden.

But he did not remember anything about her the next day, nor the next; for he grew very ill, and in his delirium he called for his Khilim, and for his Maro. Through the day, and through the night, he called, and no one answered.

The rude loom was set against the wall, a bright rug which he should have been mending, stretched upon it. He lay unconscious of those who came and went in the little room; had no kindly smile or word of thanks for the ones who ministered to him.

He did not know Anna when she spoke to him, nor see that she had changed the bright bows to dark. Not even when she laid the Khilim upon the bed beside him did he recognize her, nor as she called softly to him.

"The Keelem, grandfather! A young lady brought it. She came for you to tell her about rugs, and she heard you call, and she went quickly and got this Keelem." Anna unfolded the rug, spreading it over the dull quilt covering his bed. "And you are to keep it as long as you like. See, grandfather!"

The child gently took his hands and laid them upon the Khilim. Feebly the thin fingers closed upon

it. He held it for a moment, quietly; then springing up in the bed, he turned it round, searching uncertainly for something. In each corner he searched, and his feverish eyes devoured the innocent-looking cloth.

A swift cry of joy escaped him as he touched one particular little dark spot in the Khilim. He held it to his face, murmuring tenderly, "Maro, Maro!" Then his arms relaxed their hold; a sweet content crept over the worn face, and he lay back on the pillow and dropped off to sleep.

But no one except himself knew that from the little dark spot Maro's loving face smiled back at him, and that he heard her whisper softly, "We keep our secret, my beloved."

JANE ANN,
A WARD OF THE STATE

MRS. CARL BANK

JANE ANN, A WARD OF THE STATE

THE somber walls of the Amerson Girls' Reformatory buildings rose abruptly from the crown of a wooded hill, and outlined themselves dimly against a gray morning sky. The great black wrought-iron gate, in the low wall that inclosed the state's property, stood out sharply, like a sentinel on duty. Heavy mist hung over hill and valley, and it seemed to creep in at the doors and windows, and to fill the kitchen with a like atmosphere. *It* looked misty and gray and spotless. The girls, too, looked gray, for they were all dressed alike in gray gingham, made with short straight skirts and plain waists, without even a touch of white in the collar.

Breakfast in the big reformatory is an early and hurried affair. And now the girls hastened back and forth between kitchen and dining-room, with big bowls of hot mush, great pitchers of steaming coffee, and trays laden with thick slices of brown and white bread. No pleasant word was spoken among them, and the matron's voice sounded sharp and business-like as she hurried them on to even greater effort. Breakfast must be on time.

At last the food was on the table, and, as a gong sounded, the work girls filed back to the kitchen to their own breakfast, ready for them on a table in the corner; a table bare, without linen or ornament of any kind, a heavy white bowl, a cup, and a tin spoon at each place. The girls all ate heartily, joked with one another and planned the work of the day—except one. She sat at the end of the table, and barely tasted her food.

She had a tall, straight, full figure, carried well, because of daily calisthenics; and a face as speckled as a wild-goose egg; red hair, just plain red, heavy, straight and long; a wide mouth, housing a set of perfect white teeth. If you saw the face with the eyes downcast, you would say, "What a homely girl!" But when once you looked into the great dark eyes you saw the *soul* of Jane Ann.

The books of the institution revealed little of her history; only this: "Jane Ann, born in the workhouse. Mother died at her birth. Nothing known of her father. Given the name of Smith, by the authorities. Crime, theft. Committed till she is twenty-one."

Breakfast was soon finished, and after much clatter and the generous use of hot soapy water, the dishes were washed and put away, the sinks were scrubbed to a snowy whiteness, and the tea towels washed and hung to dry on a hot steampipe. The big kettles began to send out savory odors of soup and meat. Dinner for two hundred girls was under way.

Jane Ann had washed the dishes, as she had every morning for six long years, and now stood idly looking out into the dreary gray day. On a sunny morning the outlook from the kitchen window was pleasant. There were green, evenly trimmed lawns, with well placed trees and flowering shrubs, and a path winding its way to the power-house at the foot of the hill. But now the grass was a sickly yellow, the shrubs and trees hung their heads dejectedly, and the little path was mostly mud, with rivulets crossing and recrossing it.

It seemed to Jane Ann, as she stood looking through the one little place that she had rubbed dry with a corner of her apron, on the steam-covered window, that life stretched out ahead of her, just as dreary and gray and contracted as this bit of out-of-doors.

Of course, it would look different, she reflected, if the sun had been shining. The lawn would have sparkled with thousands of rain-drops, the trees and shrubs would have held up their heads proudly, and blossomed, and even that old wet path would have been dry and smooth and inviting. Life would have looked different to her—her thought ran on—if she had been *pretty.* Someone would come here some day, and say, "I want a good capable girl." And then she would be sent for, and the matron would say, "Here is Jane Ann. *She* is capable and neat and honest, and has a face you would be pleased to see about you every day." And the Someone would smile and say, "She is just the girl I want!" And Jane Ann would be happy ever afterwards!

But instead, she was as homely as this old gray day. All the day needed was *red hair,* and they would look just alike!

"What's the use, anyway," she thought forlornly, "of trying any more to be good, to live up to the rules, get my credits and all that? I don't see that *trying* does any good. I'll probably have to go on washing dishes and peeling potatoes till the end of time, and never get any chance to learn any other kind of work."

"Jane Ann!" the matron's voice cut sharply through the busy clatter of the kitchen. "Why do you idle away your time? It is now ten o'clock and the potatoes are not pared yet!"

The girl at the window did not answer nor turn her head.

The matron's face was stern. It had always been a rule with her to speak, once, only, and she demanded obedience on that basis. The other girls looked up in wonder.

"Jane Ann!" Again the voice came crisply across the noisy, steamy, odorous space of the long kitchen.

Something seemed to snap in the girl's brain; or was it her heart, she wondered. She could not tell, only it seemed that all the discontent, the longing, the lonesomeness and the heartache welled up within her until she was almost suffocated. She turned blindly, and with a tragic movement flung out her hands.

"*Think* of having a name like mine,—*Jane Ann!* Think of having it forever and *forever,* when all my life I wanted to be Gertrude or Lily or Dolly! If I had had a mother," and her voice broke, "do you suppose *she* would have called me Jane Ann? Mothers love you, if you *do* have red hair and freckles, and are as homely as sin. It's only *workhouses* that name you Jane Ann!"

The girls looked up in wonder, and the matron, who was writing an order for supplies from the commissary, looked at Jane Ann in amazement.

"I *didn't* steal those supplies at the workhouse," Jane Ann hurried on. "It was old Hannah O'Brien. I saw her do it. She's dead now, so I can tell, but do you suppose I was going to squeal on an old woman, just because she wanted a cup of tea and a bit of sugar in her room? I *did* use to sneak up stairs with hot water for her, but that wasn't stealing. They thought that I took the tea and sugar and they sent me here. When the judge said, 'Committed to the Amerson Girls' Reformatory until she is twenty-one,' I felt just as though he had said, 'Hanged by the neck until she is dead!' But I made up my mind that I would do my best, anyway, and I have. Six years I have worked in this kitchen, ever since I was twelve. They say I am competent! I ought to be. I can cook plain food, but my long suit is—peeling potatoes!"

Jane Ann's face was white as she stepped towards the matron.

"Every month since I came here I have hoped they would give me some other kind of work, and I've kept up my courage by saying, 'Next month they will! Next month they will!' But years have gone by and I am still washing dishes and peeling potatoes! Oh!" she went on passionately, "I guess I have peeled a million bushels of potatoes! I could do it with my eyes shut. And look at my hands!" She held them up. "Big and red and coarse with having them in hot water so much. There are times when I feel as though I could break every dish in this kitchen, and laugh and be glad that I was going to be punished."

Work was suspended. The only sounds besides Jane Ann's voice were kitchen sounds. A pot boiled over on the stove and made a hissing noise. The steam slightly lifted one side of the cover of a big cooker, and then let it fall with a metallic sound.

The matron rose, her face a little pale. "Jane Ann?" she said quietly in a questioning voice.

But the girl waved her back. "Don't stop me, Mrs. Chilton, please. I've got to say what I feel or I'll die! Was there ever a time," she tragically demanded, "when anyone ever thought I might want some other kind of work?—when anyone ever said to me, 'Jane Ann, you may go over to the Superintendent's dining-room and set the table, and see how nicely you can do it?' No; no one ever thought of doing *that,* and all the time I was just aching to do it, and 'way inside of me I knew I could do it. I wanted to see the beautiful white linen and silver and china, and to fix the flowers so they would look as though they were growing in the middle of the table. But no! Jane Ann, with her homely face and red hair, couldn't possibly have any desire for *such* work; she was perfectly content to *wash dishes* and *peel potatoes!*"

"That will do, Jane Ann," the matron said sternly. "Go to your work immediately!"

Utterly unheeding, the girl went on slowly and distinctly: "So—I—have—decided—to—go—on—a—strike, now! I—ab-so-lute-ly refuse—to work!" Her mouth settled in a firm straight line; she leaned back against the wall and folded her arms.

The girls looked at her in consternation. Jane Ann, always considered a model girl, going on a strike? They couldn't understand it.

The matron made one more effort to control the girl, with no result. The Superintendent came; he could do nothing. Then the nightwatchman was sent for, and Jane Ann was half dragged, half carried to the meditation room, handcuffed, and left alone. Then the girl lost all control of herself, and the air was rent with her calls and cries and hysterical laughter. Only after the hose had been turned on her, the room flooded and the girl's clothing drenched, did she become quiet.

"What do you suppose possessed Jane Ann?" the Superintendent demanded of the matron after all was quiet again. "That girl has been one of our best-behaved girls,—although you can't say much for her looks,—and I don't understand it. Well, she'll have to lose all her credits, that's all. The discipline would soon be beyond us if we overlooked this offense. I'll call up the President of the Board, and have him meet me this afternoon, and the affair settled immediately."

He hurried away to the office, stepped to the telephone and gave his number. "White 4208," he said crisply, and then after a moment: "Mr. Robertson? This is the Superintendent of Amerson. We have a girl in the meditation room who absolutely refuses to work. This girl is the one you have often noticed —the capable, homely one with red hair, who works

in the kitchen. I think it would be wise for us to consult together this afternoon if possible, as I can not reach the other members of the Board. What's that? No, she has never given any trouble before; that's what makes it so serious. I'm afraid of the effect on the other girls, who are so wrought up over the disturbance of this morning that they are all on the point of revolt. You will? For this afternoon? I shall be glad for you to know something, personally, of the difficulties of discipline, especially in a case of this kind. Very well, at two this afternoon. Good-bye."

Two hours later the matron unlocked the door of the meditation room and handed Jane Ann a slip of paper. "There!" she said sharply, "you are called before the President of the Board, and I hope that you will get what you deserve!"

"Get what I deserve?" Jane Ann repeated bitterly. "I've always got more than I deserved, so don't you worry about this time, Mrs. Chilton." And with her head held high she left the room.

She walked with firm step up the stairs and to the room where two "good men and true" were to sit in judgment on her. She raised her manacled hands and rapped on the door, which was opened by the Superintendent.

Jane Ann stepped within, and when the Superintendent motioned her to a chair, she only shook her head. Her face was white, and every freckle stood out prominently. Her heavy red hair hung in two braids far below her waist, and the water dripped from the ends and made two damp spots on the rich velvet carpet. The gray gingham hung limply around her, soiled and wrinkled with her efforts to wring the water out of it. She held her head high, and defiance looked out of the blue-black eyes, which did not falter.

The Superintendent began. "My good girl, won't you sit down? You must be rather tired after your violent exertions of this morning!"

Jane Ann shook her head.

"This trouble, now," the sarcastic voice went on,—"we want to know all about it. You certainly can have no complaint to make as to your food, or the treatment you receive. This morning, without any provocation whatever, you absolutely refused to work. We want to hear what you have to say of your inexcusable conduct. I shall turn the examination over to you, Mr. Robertson."

The President nodded gravely. He was a man of seventy, with snow-white hair and a kindly face. He spoke now, quietly. "We want to know the whole truth and nothing but the truth. What is your name?"

He looked straight into the eyes of the girl, standing still and white; and she, looking back into his, knew instinctively that he would understand.

"Yes," she answered slowly and distinctly, "I'll tell the truth, and I'll tell it *all.*"

She took a step nearer the long table behind which the men sat. The handcuffs gave a queer jingling sound.

"My name is *Jane Ann Smith!*" she began in a tense voice, and every letter was in italic. "How would you like that for a name, to keep always? How would you like a face like mine, and red hair, an outside so unattractive that no one would suspect that your soul was not freckled nor your heart beautiful? How would you like to wash dishes and peel potatoes for six years, and see nothing better in the future? How would you like to go to bed at eight o'clock, and get up in the morning at six, every day and every day?"

"The rules of the institution——" began the Superintendent, but Jane Ann turned and faced him.

"Do you know what it is to live by rule?" she demanded. "For eighteen years I have lived by rule. I have eaten and slept and played and sung and prayed by rule! *Prayed* by rule!" She repeated the words bitterly. "You think I'm praying, do you, when I kneel down at night with forty-nine other girls in that big dormitory? Well, I'm not, nor I haven't for three years, not since I was fifteen. I used to before that. I was simple enough to think there was a God, and that He cared. Oh, I used to believe, all right! Why, I was so afraid my prayers would get all tangled up with forty-nine others that I only *knelt* because it was the rule; but when everybody was asleep I got out of bed softly, and said a prayer that I thought went straight up to God, and I prayed that He would make me pretty, and that someone would want to adopt me, and that I could have some other kind of work besides washing dishes and peeling potatoes!"

The Superintendent moved uneasily in his seat. "The work of the institution has to be done. Someone has to do it, but every girl is obliged to go to school four hours every day," he defended.

"Yes," the girl answered readily, "you send me to school, and I make good use of my time. That's why I want to be something besides a machine. It doesn't take much intellect to peel potatoes or to wash dishes! I want something to do where I can use my brain! I want to learn how to do something by which I can earn my living when my time is up here. Where could I find work in the profession you have taught me," she demanded sarcastically, "except in the kitchen of a hotel or a restaurant? And what kind of a place would that be for a girl with a handicap of eighteen years of institution life?"

"What did you do, Jane Ann, before you came here?" asked the President, his keen eyes studying her.

"Do!" the girl flashed back. "I was born in a workhouse, and I lived in an orphans' home for twelve years! What do you suppose I *could* do?"

The President spoke again: "Haven't you a mother, or a father, or any relative to take an interest in you?"

"No, no one in the whole world!" the girl answered sadly. "I never had a father, and a mother only for an hour. And oh, *how* I've wanted a mother! I wanted a mother to love me. I wanted a mother to say, 'Jane Ann, I think a blue ribbon would look better than a pink,' or, 'Don't go out without your rubbers today; I'm afraid you will get your feet wet,' or, 'Jane Ann, come into the house this minute and wash the dishes, or I'll box your ears; the dish-water is getting cold!"

She smiled whimsically.

"But most of all I wanted someone to say good-night to me. Not 'good-night, girls,' but 'good-night, *dear,*' and tuck me in bed and—kiss me! Not once in eighteen years has anyone kissed me!"

Jane Ann's black eyes filled with tears, and she raised both hands to wipe them away.

"Take the handcuffs off that girl!" thundered the President, and the Superintendent hastened to comply, defending himself with:

"But discipline has to be maintained, and this girl defied us all and we felt compelled to resort to stern methods. Besides, we have a fine credit system by which a girl may gain her freedom sooner, on good behavior."

Jane Ann was looking down indifferently at the red marks on her wrists. Now she raised her head,

and her eyes flamed. "Here's to your credit system!" and she snapped her fingers. "Haven't I seen girls, *good* girls, lose all their credits after months of patient trying, for just one moment of anger, or the breaking of one silly rule, when all the time their hearts were all right? And close beside them a sleek, smooth devil of a girl was getting and keeping her credits just because she knew how to *act,* while all the time inside of her was a heart as black as night!

"You don't mean to be unkind," she went on with a voice tremulous with earnestness, "but oh, why," she cried with clenched hands, "can't you understand that we are just human beings—separate human beings —and treat us as you would want *your girl* treated."

The President rose hastily, and, crossing the room, stood before a window, with his back to the others, and furtively wiped his eyes.

"Do you know what I'm going to do when my time is up here?" she demanded passionately. "I'm going to work among wayward girls!" She glanced at the Superintendent. "Oh, I'll go so far away that no one will ever have heard of me! I'm going to work in a reformatory—a girls' reformatory; and when a girl breaks a rule, I'm going to love her; and when she breaks *all* the rules, I'm still going to love her. I'm not going to say, 'My good girl, you shall not do thus and so.' I'm going to say, 'Dear girl, don't you know this is wrong? Now let us sit down here and talk this over as girl to girl,' and I'm going to put my arm around her while I'm talking. And don't you see? *I'll* understand, because I've been through it all myself. *I'll* know all the bitterness and heartache and rebellion and lonesomeness,—especially the lonesomeness!"

The Superintendent's face showed surprise and consternation. He had been reading the closely writ-

ten lines of the story of the girl's inner life, where heretofore he had thought were only blank pages. Could it be that all these years he had been blind?

The pathetic voice went on: "I don't suppose you can understand how I can be lonely among two hundred girls. But I'm lonesome to be *alone.* Sometimes I've crept out of bed at night, and over to one corner of the dormitory, and with my face to the wall and my fingers in my ears I have tried to imagine no one else was there, but I just couldn't," she ended simply.

The President turned and opened his lips to speak, but unheeding, Jane Ann challenged: "Do you know that until this morning in the meditation room I have never been alone in my life? I have worked in *squads,* I have slept in *dormitories,* I have gone to church in *companies!* Sometimes I feel as though I would give my soul to have a little room six by nine that I could go into and lock the door and be *alone!*"

There was not a sound in the room except the quick breathing of the girl, and a bird's song that came in through the open window.

Taking a step nearer the window, Jane Ann pointed to a wood-lot half a mile away. "When my three more years are up, I'm going over to that little patch of woods. I'm going to stretch my arms up to the blue sky and shout, 'I'm free! I'm free!' Then I'm going to bury my face in the soft moss and leaves and cry my heart out, and thank God, if there *is* a God, that at last I'm *alone!*"

The Superintendent cleared his throat. "Jane Ann," he said, and the sarcastic note was gone from his voice, "there's one thing I want you to explain. What was that package you had secreted, which, when Mrs. Chilton found you hiding it, you would not give up, but burned before her very eyes?"

"Yes, I'll tell that, too," the girl answered steadily. "Those were my mother's letters!" A tender smile flitted across her face.

"Your *mother's letters!*" both men cried.

"It was only my 'pretend mother,'" she answered softly. "You see, it was this way, I think I'm the only girl here who has never got a letter, and when mail day came and everyone got a letter from someone or somewhere, I just *couldn't stand* it! So I got some wrapping paper—they gave it to me in the commissary—and made some envelopes and sheets of paper, and wrote myself some lovely letters. I pretended I was in boarding school, and that my mother was traveling, and my letters would come, sometimes from Paris, then London, then Munich. The last one was from Switzerland, and she told me all about that lovely country, and that she would be home next month! You don't know how glad I was to get that letter. I slept with it under my pillow every night for a week!"

Jane Ann took a deep breath. There was a tender light in the black eyes.

"They always began, 'Dearest Daughter,' or 'Precious Daughter,' or 'Sweetheart,' and were always signed, 'Your loving mother,' with the *loving* underscored *three* times."

She went on simply as she turned to the President: "You see, we haven't any place to keep things here, so I had to put my letters in my pillow-case, and every night, when the girls were asleep, I would creep out of bed, and over to the one light which was always burning in the dormitory, and read my letters; then I would go to sleep with them hugged tight, and in the morning put them back in my pillow-case. That was where Mrs. Chilton found them."

Suddenly the President turned and faced the girl. "Jane Ann," he said quietly, "what is it that has

kept you all these years from being a bad girl, and that only today you have revolted?"

"I'll show you," the girl answered, and into her face flashed a great light.

Stepping quickly to the other end of the long table, she snatched a pencil and a piece of paper, and after a few swift strokes, held up the paper before the President's astonished eyes. He was looking at himself on that piece of paper,—himself, even to the little lock of hair that always persisted in standing straight up, and to the mole on his chin.

"Who taught you to draw like that?" the President demanded.

"I don't know," the girl answered simply. "I *used* to think it was God, when I believed in Him. *That* was the one thing that kept me from going mad," she continued, "*the one thing that no one could take from me!*

"I've made lovely pictures," she said dreamily, "of imagined places—old castles and things, you know. I've made 'em on the frosted window-pane with a hair-pin, and on scraps of paper, and once I made a lovely picture of Mrs. Chilton on a cake of soap. She almost caught me at it, but I put it down in the water quickly."

There was silence for a moment, then suddenly Jane Ann turned like a fury, her white face quivering with passion.

"I hope, *now,* you are satisfied!" she cried wildly. "You have stripped me bare! You have taken all I had to give up, *everything!* My pride and my self-respect and my loyalty, yes, *loyalty!*" she repeated the word harshly, "for until today I *have* been loyal! I've never been punished but once in the six years I've been here, but something snapped in my heart this morning, and I went mad. You've taken my mother's

letters!"—a long quivering breath—"and my one precious secret that I've hugged close for years!" She held out her arms, and her haggard face looked old.

"Here I am! All that is left! A girl with a homely face and red hair, and a name that she *hates! Jane Ann Smith, a ward of the state!* Now what are you going to do with me?"

The two men were pale. The President with one great stride reached the girl. He held up his hand as though taking an oath.

"*I'll* tell you what we are going to do with you, Jane Ann, a ward of the state. We're going to see that you have a *square deal!* We're going to see that you have a *home,* and a chance to develop that wonderful talent of yours. And as for the name that you hate," the President smiled, "some day, young lady, you'll have a chance to change that. In the meantime, suppose we call you Jean. Will you shake hands on it?"

He stepped closer to the girl. Jane Ann put up trembling hands and waved him back. Her face was like that of one who sees a miracle.

"Wait, wait!" she panted, her breath labored as of one spent with running. "I've got to ask God's pardon first, the God I denied." And utterly unconscious of self and her surroundings, she slipped to her knees and poured out her heart.

"God! *dear* God! I take it back, all I said!" she cried brokenly. "Forgive me, I didn't understand! I thought you didn't care, that nobody cared! and all the time you were getting this beautiful thing ready for me. To have a *home* and my name *Jean!* I can't bear so much happiness. Oh, I can't—bear—it——"

Her voice trailed away; she slipped to the floor unconscious; and the men stood as with uncovered heads in the presence of something holy.

THE TEMPTATION OF ANN O'BRIEN

HARRIET HOLMES HASLETT

THE TEMPTATION OF ANN O'BRIEN

THE impartial sun shone alike on quiet Telegraph Hill and busy Market Street one early summer morning. Later perhaps, the fog bank lowering through the Gate would send out long white ribbons to enwrap the hill, and rising, spread great gray shadows over San Francisco's streets; but at present the sunlight winked and danced in the eyes of little Nan O'Brien on the hill.

Nan gurgled and blinked, and surveyed her one-year-old toes with supreme content. She had just accomplished the feat of removing the second of her faded blue "bootees," the superfluous gift of a charitable neighbor, and was flaunting her bare feet in gay abandon above her curly head. Faded blue worsted does not furnish much sustenance, and after chewing it a while Nan struggled to a sitting posture and dropped the moist scrap over the edge of her old perambulator. The porch railing caught it a moment, next a light breeze, then with happy fascination the baby watched its fluttering descent into the abyss below.

Only two feet of plank, a bit of knotted rope securing her perambulator, and a strap around her own fat waist stood between little Nan and Grim Death lurking thirty feet below the rocky cliff of the hill. Only the day before Death had caught her three-year-old brother, Tim, down there on the stones, yet now she sat, simple little morsel of human flesh, laughing to see her bootee vanish into the sunlit air.

Inside the shanty her weary mother ironed—ironed the fine laces and embroideries of another woman's child—while the sun with relentless truth pointed out a corner where lay the quiet body of little Tim.

In Ann O'Brien's bosom was a stone where her heart had been but yesterday morning, yet she ironed on, mechanically going from stove to table, from table back again to stove, with never a glance toward the sunlit corner, nor through the open doorway where little Nan laughed.

These laces and embroideries meant food and drink to her and her baby, and also to stalwart Tom, her husband.

A warehouse elevator had done its best to crush the life out of Tom last fall, and all his "damage claim" had gone to pay hospital and doctor's bills. His work now was spasmodic at best, but with spring's reviving force he hoped soon to regain his one-time vigor. Meanwhile Ann washed and ironed, fluted and pleated daily, and often far into the night. She was young and strong, with abundant old-country vitality to draw upon, but there is a point beyond which youth and strength refuse to follow. Ann O'Brien had reached that point now; the dullness of desperation had come upon her.

Bravery had departed; in its place reigned defiance.

Beside her on the table lay a piece of red-stained newspaper, the butcher's wrapping for a dinner earlier in the week.

Sometimes Pat O'Flannigan, the ten-year-old newsboy living lower down on the hill, who delivered Ann's baskets of clean clothes on her busiest days, "loaned her the read" of an evening paper when he ran home for his bit of supper. Aside from that she and Tom read the blood-stained scraps a careless butcher gave her, enclosing the daily half-pound of meat.

Then again the charitable neighbor, Meg Finney, ran up occasionally with her scrap, so news on the hill traveled surely if somewhat out of date.

"Inside the Shanty
Her Weary Mother Ironed—Ironed
the Fine Laces and Embroideries of Another
Woman's Child"

Only night before last she had climbed the hill with eager excitement to show the alluring facts her paper disclosed. By some strange mistake the butcher had used a recent date for her evening meat, and the paper revealed a full-page "ad" of a wonderful bargain sale in progress. Dear to the hearts of both women were the columns devoted to "sales" and "bargains," and never before had the appeal been so potent.

The sheer nainsook, the dainty laces and embroideries passing through Ann O'Brien's hands, all were an education in what those fortunate inhabitants of Western Addition palaces could do for their children. Slowly the trend of Ann's thoughts was changing towards the filmy stuffs upon her ironing table.

How often she had with girlish delight draped the little garments upon her own children and laughed to see the nonchalant air of little Nan, and the conscious strut of the more worldly-wise Tim! Now beside her on the table lay the full-page advertisement, and as the iron traveled back and forth her eyes glanced mechanically ever and again at lists and prices.

Enticing cuts of "Papa's Little Man" and "Mamma's Darling" displayed all the latest articles in the children's department at marvelous reductions. The Emporium assured its patrons that never again would they be given such an opportunity. Indeed, the prices were a surprise to the Management itself!

Night before last Ann and neighbor Meg Finney had reveled in visions of what "might be."

"Sure, there's never any tellin'," the optimistic neighbor had said. "Your Tom may be after makin' a lucky strike soon, an' maybe your ladies will be payin' up more reg'lar."

There it was! They didn't always pay up "reg'lar," these mothers of fine lace and embroidery

darlings, and it was only another part of the laundress's life to await their pleasure.

On the reverse side of the sheet was something that had sent the two women's thoughts and tongues deeper into the problems of modern living. "A lady," they read, "one of the local Smart Set," had been arrested for "kleptomania" and for "robbing the U. S. mail of small packages." Being a woman with influential friends she had been able to plead ill health—nervous exhaustion—and her physician's certificate cleared her of all blame.

"What's this it is, klep—klep—toman—nia?" queried ignorant Ann of the more sophisticated neighbor woman.

"Och! it's jist plain stealin', that's all it is! Only when ye're rich it's a kind of a game, an' ye git off if ye have enough o' the cold cash!"

"What, fer heaven, do they want to steal when they're rich?" wondered simple Ann.

"Sure, it's the more they have, the more they do be always wantin', Ann. See here, did ye see this about your lady out there on Pacific Avenoo?"

No, Ann hadn't seen it for sure, so Meg had pointed out the news item concerning the wealthy woman who had been detected by the Customs officers smuggling in fabulous amounts of rare laces and fine stuffs from the Orient.

"An' will she have to pay?" Ann had wondered.

"Ah, maybe! But she'll get off aisy, don't ye worry!"

Then they had returned to the bargain sales, but the questions persisted in the mind of the toiling young mother.

Why—why—did she have to work so hard to keep honest, while others so much better off—but it was "all of a muddle!"

"Why don't ye go down an' see what ye can get fer Nan an' Timmy?" the neighbor had asked. "Sure they need somethin' fer Sundays, an' it's the best chance ye'll have ter get somethin' cheap, by the looks o' this."

"Och, Nan's well enough!" answered the mother, "but I'd like ter find somethin' fer Timmy fer Sunday school."

"Here's jist the thing!" And Meg had pointed out what indeed was "just the thing" in Russian blouses for "$2.98 in plain figures."

"Wouldn't he jist look swell in one o' thim!" Ann had exclaimed with glistening eyes. But could she afford it? If she could only collect what was owing she might, but what with fuel being so high, and everything!

Then a miracle had happened. Panting up the hill came Patsy O'Flannigan with a great piece of good fortune for Mrs. O'Brien.

He had carried home a large basket of beautifully laundered garments that very afternoon, and lo! the lady had sent down word by the stylish maid for him to wait, and Pat had waited till the lady came. "An awful swell lady," she proved to be, but had aroused Pat's ire with her first question. Could he be trusted, she wanted to know, and his blunt red nose had gone up in disdain at the question, and he "didn't know fer sure if he could!"

"Howsomever, she guv it ter me!" he announced finally, and yielded up the precious envelope he held in his freckled hand to Ann. She discovered within a mine of gold. Twenty dollars of back debts to the weary washwoman had the "swell lady" owed. Perhaps she had attended an "uplift meeting" that day, who knows, but that does not enter now into the happiness of Ann O'Brien!

Brilliant visions assailed her and the charitable neighbor.

Tomorrow they would take a morning off. As soon as Tom's breakfast was safely over and the house "red up," the two children would get such a scrubbing as they would never forget.

"The poor kids!" ejaculated Pat.

When Meg had disposed of her "man" with breakfast and strong hints to be off to his work, forth they would all go, a happy quartette, to a morning of bargain hunting.

"An' now yer can afford a dress fer Nan," said the neighbor, and Ann had thought maybe it would happen that way!

The sunlight gleamed and danced in the eyes of little Nan, and Nan herself gurgled, and caring nothing for the glories of bargain sales, tossed her wee socks gaily over the cliffs.

Wearily the mother ironed the costly garments which perhaps had found their way through Customs gates without a toll, and her eyes still feasted on the cuts of "Papa's Little Man" in the Russian blouse, "$2.98 in plain figures." The "why—why—" of her soul tormented her.

Coming to the end of a row of pleats she crossed to the stove to change her iron, and paused a moment to look at the quiet corner. The sunlight had left it now. Slowly she went and turned back the sheet, and gazed stolidly upon the placid little face.

Was it really her Timmy who lay there so unnaturally still?

Where was he now? Sure, he was in heaven, for hadn't he been baptized in the first few hours as all good Catholics should be! But her heart of stone neither quivered nor thrilled at the thought of how

happy her Timmy must be, and mechanically she replaced the sheet and returned to her work.

So Ann O'Brien ironed on the hill because it was her lot in life; and down on Market Street the great Emporium "flung wide its doors and announced wonderful bargains in the Children's Department."

"Hullo, kid! Say, Mis' O'Brien, Nan's a-throwin' away of her bootees!" Patsy O'Flannigan was again coming up the path, and the second damp bootee had struck him full in the face.

"Ye think ye're funny, don't ye, kid?" he demanded, sternly facing the unconcerned Nan.

Making some unintelligible remarks about a "Pat, Pat," she concentrated her flighty attention upon a butterfly just then appearing near the balcony railing.

Mrs. O'Brien came to the door. "Oh, the brat!" she said, lifelessly. "Run down and find the other bootee, Patsy, there's a good boy."

"Sure!" responded willing Patsy, taking a short coast down the steep bank from one path to the next on the seat of his long-suffering overalls. Rescuing the truant bootee from a niche in the dusty rocks he came triumphantly up the path again.

"I'll fix the young un," he announced. Fishing in his voluminous pockets he extracted a bit of string which had once been white, and two nails, yesterday's most precious find. Ann watched him dully as he threaded the string through the dirty, faded little bootees and securely tied and nailed them with a twist and bowknot around the plump ankles of unsuspecting Nan.

"Now ye're fixed, young lady!" he announced triumphantly.

"Ye're a good boy, Patsy," said Ann, but while she watched him she made a sudden resolve.

"Run down an' tell Mrs. Finney I'd be glad ter have

her come an' set awhile with Timmy," she said. "I'm going down town ter buy his new suit."

Patsy regarded her with startled eyes. "His new suit!" he repeated, backing away a trifle, half expecting some sort of maniac thrust from Ann. But it was no crazy woman that the boy listened to; it was an ignorant, sorrow-stricken mother dumbly trying to satisfy a great longing in her heart, and do the only thing she could now think of which would please her Timmy before he should be taken away tomorrow.

For, as she explained to Pat, she was going down to the Emporium "to buy for Timmy that swell little suit he had been so pleased about in the paper." Tom would think her foolish, and hadn't wanted her to break the twenty just now, but to save it up against the rent next month. But think how pleased Timmy would be if he only knew he was getting the new suit after all! Sure, he could only wear it for his "laying-out," but she "couldn't bear to think o' him goin' out o' this world with never wearin' a store suit o' clothes even oncet, dear little Timmy," who had lived his short life in the out-grown jumpers and overalls of Patsy himself.

Patsy, with awe in his round, greenish eyes, agreed to all this with enthusiasm and ran down the hill to perform his errand with the greatest alacrity, while baby Nan was released from straps and knotted rope to be carried indoors to receive the intended scrubbing of yesterday. For while Timmy's suit was the main object of the journey to Market Street, Nan was to be set up in a dress, and "real shoes that would button on fer oncet!"

Many mothers and tiny tots had visited the great sale in the children's department before Ann arrived that morning. She walked because of the lumbering

old perambulator, and a long, weary walk it is from Telegraph Hill to Market Street, even when one's heart does not feel like a bit of the bog of old Ireland.

Babies more fortunate and modish than Nan appeared in convenient little go-carts which folded up at a touch, with baby in it or out of it at the convenience of the propelling force, but Nan's uncompromising vehicle, a loan from the charitable neighbor, and shelterer of a decade or so of babies, blocked up an entrance and threatened seriously to hamper traffic for a while.

"You can't wheel that buggy around in here, lady," a busy floor walker informed Ann, after she had succeeded in getting the rear wheel free of the swinging door, and admitted a surge of impatient bargain-seekers.

Ann surveyed him with unimpressed calm. "An' where would I be lavin' it?" she inquired.

He waved his hand toward the freight elevator.

"You can check it, with your baby, down in the basement."

"Sure, I need my baby to get fitted to a pair of shoes," protested Ann.

"Very well, lady, shoe department third aisle on your right, check your 'taxi' later!"

Arrived at the third aisle on her right, having bumped recklessly through the crowd, a mid-aisle counter filled with "Odd Sizes in Infants' Shoes" caught Ann's interested eyes. Little Nan chewed her plump fist, and occasionally tugged at the old bootees to get at her toes, but the nails and bowknots of Patsy's invention held fast, and she was forced to content herself with the sustenance the fist afforded.

After some minutes a slim, young person came to wait upon Ann, and together they found a pair of soft tan leather shoes with glistening buttons among the

"Odd Sizes." With the utmost disinterest Nan watched her mother and the saleswoman crowd her fat young toes into the shoes. She arched her instep and did other remarkable things to render the process as difficult as possible, but the shoes finally went on and were buttoned.

"They're a perfect fit, and the swellest thing we've got in the house,—just came in this morning," declared the saleswoman, forgetful of the fact that this was the counter of left-over odd sizes.

"They're a little wide in the sole maybe," ventured Ann.

"You don't want to get them too narrow. She'll grow into them,—won't you, Snookums?" replied the girl, and Nan touched with approval the glistening buttons.

"Well, I guess I'll take 'em," said Ann mechanically. What matter, so long as they covered the child's feet, and made a decent accompaniment to the dress she was going to purchase for her to wear at the all-important event tomorrow!

"Anything else?" queried the saleswoman, with pencil poised; "and shall I have these wrapped?"

"She'll wear 'em," said Ann, "an' I'm going to the children's department, but first I'll get her checked."

"Checked? Eh? Oh!" with sudden enlightenment; "the baby, you mean! You'll have to go to the elevator. I'll give you a transfer."

The transfer was a mysterious article in the hands of Ann O'Brien, but she soon understood that under its guidance she was to make a purchase in the long-anticipated children's department.

To get rid of the incubus Nan-in-the-perambulator was the first thing to accomplish. Nan herself could not have told how she was finally deposited in the care of a discreet, white-aproned individual, who gave her

mother a ticket with a number on it in exchange for her plump person, so absorbing was the glint of the new shoes.

"She'll soon have the buttons twisted off, ma'am," warned the discreet individual; but Ann O'Brien's thoughts were already in the children's department, and with an absent wave of the hand which held the transfer and ticket, she hastened away in search of the "$2.98 in plain figures."

"Ah, an' it was darlin' they were, sure!" Entranced, she wandered before the show-cases in which various little unlife-like figures were exhibited, her sad mother-heart giving glad bounds once or twice when she pictured her Timmy in one of those sweet suits, only to return to stone under the pressure of cruel memory.

She was long in getting waited upon and her choice was all made before the saleswoman came.

"I'll take that one, if ye plaze," she requested, pointing to a small white figure clad in a white duck suit with jaunty belt of patent leather.

"Just over here, all sizes, that's the model," answered the saleswoman, hurriedly running over a pile of white duck. "What size, please?"

"He's three years old," answered Ann.

The woman extracted a much-flattened suit which gave promise of filling out over the required figure.

Ann pulled it about and measured it dubiously. "I suppose it'll be all right," she said.

"It's the size you asked for. Why didn't you bring the boy along and try it on him?"

Ann's voice was low and the saleswoman could scarcely catch her answer. "I couldn't bring him today," she murmured.

"It'll be all right, take my word for it, if he's average size."

"I'll take it," said Ann. Then she thought of her transfer. "Here, they gave me this."

"All right; charged and sent?"

"I'll take it with me, an'—an'—I've got my money here," she began, when her startled eyes caught sight of the figures the woman was putting on the transfer.

"It's—it's—$2.98, isn't it?" she stammered.

"These are $5.98, don't you see the figures?" asked the saleswoman pointing to the show-case. Sure enough, there they were; $5.98 on the jaunty little boy in white duck. Next to him posed a far less attractive one in blue striped denim, and this was marked $2.98.

"You'd better pay the difference; you'll get your money's worth," urged the ready-tongued saleswoman; and again the tormenting questions entered Ann O'Brien's soul. Why—why—why not cheat and steal and be extravagant like other women—women who were worlds better off than she? Here was she, Ann O'Brien, paying a price which carried her into the "kleptomaniac's" world, for that magical $5.98 swept her far and away above her own class on the hill! Why, to be sure, should she not try "some o' those fine lady dodges," and not get caught? She could take chances as well as another!

So her poor, befogged brain, dulled with a grief she could not express, urged her on. In a vision she saw her Timmy disappointed, and that put the finish to her decision.

"Sure, it's all right," she said; "and I'll take it with me. It would be foolish to bother with the cheap one."

"Anything else?" she was asked.

Then what more easy than to add a slip of fine white lawn trimmed with dainty embroidery for Nan! This required a tiny white petticoat, and soon the transfer check showed that more than half of her twenty golden dollars would be gone.

"Are you going to any other counter?" asked the puzzled saleswoman, noting the incongruity between Ann's attire and her purchases.

Ann had taken another resolve during the short interval.

"I'll go back to the shoes," she answered, "an', an' —the stockin's." Again came the vision, and this time Timmy wore new black shoes and beautiful white stockings like those on the boy in the show-case.

"Very well, madam, your package will be made up at the last counter, and you will pay there," said the obliging saleswoman.

Half way down in the crowded elevator Ann's heart gave a jump of remorse. She had forgotten little Nan this long time!

"Oh, stop! stop!" she cried, and then remembered that Nan and the perambulator were in the basement.

Hastening back to the shoe department she ran against the main aisle floor walker. It was a well known fact that he often found it convenient to linger near the row of chairs waited upon by the saleswoman in the shoe department. Just now he was returning from a brief but happy conversation on the state of the weather, and had gained her acceptance for a proposed visit to a show that evening.

He turned to look suspiciously at Ann as she hurried past him; something in her harassed expression arresting his attention.

"I guess she checked her kid all right," he thought.

The crowd had increased around the shoes, and the mother's heart grew more and more insistent to return to her baby as she waited, yet it could not deflect her from her purpose of carrying out the details of the vision her mind so vividly held.

At last, when the saleswoman came again to inquire what she wanted, her impatience found an outlet in a

plaint of anxiety to get back to her baby—"she was afraid somethin' had happened to her!"

"Why, she's all right," assured the saleswoman. "Nothing can happen to her down there."

Despite her assurances Ann was uneasy, and between that and her uncertainty about the sizes of shoes and stockings, got into such a "boggle," that the young saleswoman's condescension turned to kindness; she saw Ann through the ordeal of the stocking purchase at another counter, and closed the transfer herself.

Then ensued an interminable wait for the package and change.

The package arrived first; Ann's patience gave out.

"I'll come back for the change," she said, and started away towards the basement elevator.

A minute later the floor walker again encountered the young saleswoman, this time quite out of her usual domain.

"What are you doing on this aisle, Miss Perkins?" he inquired with all the dignity necessary for the observant ears of near-by salespeople.

"Beg your pardon," she demurely answered. "I had an errand over to the freight elevator, Mr. Kane."

The floor walker passed discreetly on, leaving Miss Perkins to slip quietly back to her own counter, her heart glowing with the knowledge of a tiny deed of kindness.

Ten minutes later she was interrupted by a call from an agitated youth in buttons.

"You're wanted, No. 16, over at the hosiery," he commanded.

"See here, I'm busy," she answered impatiently.

"Mr. Kane says to come right off," insisted the important Buttons.

Turning her customer over to her next neighbor at the counter with a shrug meaning, "What now!" Jen-

nie Perkins, alias No. 16 on the books of the establishment, followed the messenger to the hosiery counter.

Ann O'Brien sat there stolidly and beside her was the perambulator containing Nan. Vainly was Mr. Kane endeavoring to clear up a mystery hinging upon the strange woman's change.

The girl at the hosiery counter greeted No. 16 with excitement.

"See here, Jen, this lady's come back for her change. You know yourself you grabbed it out of my hand and ran after her with it!"

"I sure did," asserted No. 16.

Mr. Kane regarded Ann O'Brien and her impedimenta with perplexity. He had felt the woman meant trouble from the moment he saw her entering the store. Now here she was attempting to implicate his favorite in an argument over change!

Ann's face was expressionless. "It was here I got my package," she said monotonously, "an' I told the young lady I'd come back fer the change, it was so long o' comin'."

"Yes, but I ran after you, don't you remember?" broke in No. 16 eagerly, the glow of the kindly deed returning; "and gave you your change near the elevator, to save you coming back!"

The floor walker's face lightened. So that was the "errand" which had carried demure Miss Perkins to the freight elevator!

"You hear what this young lady says, madam. You must be mistaken about your change; look again in your purse."

"I've got no change," declared Ann stolidly. She continued to gaze at the hosiery seller. "I told this young lady I'd come back for it."

"Well, all I can say," asserted that young lady angrily, "you'd better ask Miss Perkins what she done

with that money and check she grabbed outer my hand! I ain't got no time for such foolishness!" And she flounced away leaving the affair to be settled by the trio most concerned, and round-eyed Nan, who while they stood there had succeeded in twisting two of the three glistening buttons from one of her beautiful new shoes.

By this time a group of interested onlookers had gathered and Mr. Kane grew impatient.

"I don't see what we can do, madam. I have implicit confidence in the young lady's word. She says she gave you your change. It was not her place to do so, but—"

"I havn't got no change," again declared Ann.

The floor walker looked helplessly at No. 16 who ran her fingers up the back of her fuzzy head and settled her barrette with extreme perplexity.

"You believe me, Mr. Kane, don't you?" she pleaded. "It would cost me my place if I did a thing like that. Besides—*me* to cheat another lady!" The bare thought was too much for No. 16 and she retired behind a wisp of blue-bordered handkerchief.

"Come up to the office, madam, and you too, Miss Perkins, and you, No. 32," to the indignant hosiery saleswoman. "We'll investigate this matter further," commanded the desperate floor walker.

So once again the perambulator entered the freight elevator propelled by a stolid woman followed by a trio of excited people.

In the office questions and answers flew back and forth in the same order as they had downstairs. Yes, No. 32 *had* received the change for the customer just after she left. Yes, the "lady" (the contempt expressed by No. 32 was superb) had said she would come back for her change. Miss Perkins had then run back, *snatched* the change and check out of her *very*

hand, and run off with it, and that was *all* to her knowledge, and she hadn't no patience with such *unbusinesslike* doings!

Did No. 16 agree that all this had taken place? Yes, No. 16 was sure it was just like that; and so it went, but each time the investigation struck the stone wall of Ann O'Brien's declaration:

"I haven't got no change!"

In Mr. Kane's opinion there was but one thing left to do.

"Very well, madam," said he. "You compel me to adopt stringent methods. I shall send for the woman inspector from the Hospital Department. You and Miss Perkins shall be searched."

No. 16's gasp of dismay had no effect upon his adamant heart for his belief in her innocence was unshaken, but the stolid willingness of the strange woman to be searched gave him a new thought. With careful scrutiny his gaze wandered over the old perambulator and its chubby occupant.

Meeting his eyes with a roguish glance from her own blue ones, little Nan ingratiatingly held out a small shining object. It was the last of the three buttons from her shoe.

"Thank you, little one," he said. "Wait a minute, ladies. Before sending for the inspector I'll do a little detective work myself. *I'll search the baby!*"

A look of fear shot through the stolidity of Ann O'Brien's face and she stepped towards the perambulator, but was waved aside by the floor walker.

"Not so fast, madam," he said. "The baby's teaching you a lesson in honesty!"

Nan's chubby hands were busy with her buttonless shoe. Breathless, she tugged. Off came the shoe, "too wide in the sole," and over the floor rolled something let free by the jerk—coins of gold and silver.

The shoe dropped discarded to the floor, and the baby, glorying in her success, began enthusiastically on the other foot.

There was silence for a moment in the office—then a loud sobbing. The stolid calm of two days was broken and the heart of stone which had lain in Ann O'Brien's bosom pulsed with remorse-stricken pain.

"Ah, I'm not fit to live!" she cried. Then between great sobs it all came out—the whole pitiful tale of longing for the unattainable, ending with the vision of her Timmy in the new suit and shoes, which "to be sure he could only wear fer his laying-out!"

A change came upon the trio standing there. They had come with condemnation in their minds, but swiftly and subtly something sweeter and more unusual took its place—heartfelt sympathy.

"You may go back to your work, No. 32," spoke Mr. Kane; "and you needn't mention this."

"What d'ye take me for?" demanded No. 32 soberly, and departed to her counter.

"Would you like the afternoon off, Miss Perkins?" asked Mr. Kane.

"Wouldn't I?" ejaculated demure Miss Perkins, sensing a plan in the floor walker's mind.

"If you feel like a walk I wish you would go home with this lady, to help with the buggy, and see if it's all just as she says."

"Ah, it's all true, sir, ivery bit, and may the Powers strike me dead!" moaned Ann.

"I don't doubt you now, Mrs. O'Brien, but it will ease my own mind if I ever have to place the matter before headquarters," said Mr. Kane.

No. 16 slipped away to get her hat and coat, mentally calculating the difference between twenty dollars and the amount of Ann O'Brien's change; the thought of another kindly deed in the future warming her heart.

Later she joined Ann at one of the street entrances.

"Sure I can never thank you enough, sir!" Ann was saying, but Mr. Kane's attention was given to Miss Perkins.

"Don't let's go to a show tonight," she whispered. "I'll stay up there awhile and see if I can do anything to help. Will you come for me by and by?"

He nodded assent, and watched them as they crossed busy Market Street.

THE QUEST

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TORREY CONNOR

THE QUEST

A GAUNT gray-bearded man emerged from the swirling cloud of alkali dust. He moved slowly, painfully; and drove before him a small burro, burdened by the camp outfit.

The man's clothing was rent by the spikes of the Spanish bayonet; he was a scarecrow in his flapping rags; his feet were ill protected by the broken shoes. It was evident, though, that he did not feel the prick of the thorns, nor the bruises his feet had sustained in their long march over desert sands and volcanic wastes. In his eyes was the look of one who gazes at far horizons.

Three men came after him. Two of them were leading pack animals, and the third, a Mexican, staggering as he walked, bore upon his shoulders the load of the locoed animal they had shot, back there at the water hole.

The trackless waste was bounded by rolling hills. The level expanse stretched unbroken save for clumps of giant cacti,—those sentinels of the desert standing eternally on guard above the bleaching bones of hapless victims.

A round, unwinking, malignant eye, the sun glared from a copper-colored sky. The wind that came in little puffs, heaping, leveling, whirling the sand hither and thither, was like a blast from a furnace. In the scant shade of sage-brush and Spanish bayonet lizards panted; the horned toad sought shelter in vain. As the gusts increased in violence, blinding sand showers filled the air.

A man at the tail of the procession spoke up:

"Mebbe the Perfessor knows whar he's goin'?" He raised his voice to make himself heard. "If he does,

why'd he hire us to find his gold mine for him, eh, Williams?"

"Fer the pleasure of our sassiety, Watkins. What else?" Williams grinned through cracked lips.

"Wal, this day's my last. I've had enough of it. We shouldn't 'a' left the water hole. Thar's a storm comin' up, an'—"

A hoarse cry from the leader arrested the words on his lips. The three men started forward, but the Professor waved them back.

"Didn't you s-s-see it?" he shouted. "Gone, *gone,* —swallowed up r-r-right before m-my eyes! Another step, and I'd h-have b-been there too."

"What's happened?" cried Williams. "Whar's the burro?"

"Three hosses dead at the pisened spring, a burro shot, an' now we've struck th' risin' earth," said Watkins. "Luck's ag'in you, Mister,—better turn back."

"No use lookin' for th' beast, Perfessor," Williams chimed in. "When he broke through th' crust he went down ten—mebbe twenty feet. Nothin' that goes under th' risin' earth ever comes out."

There was no difficulty in marking the pitfall,—the spot where the burro had gone down; the disturbed area heaved and shuddered as if some captive monster writhed in torment below the broken crust. A water cask, dislodged from the burro's back in the animal's struggles to free itself from the sucking sand, was still visible. The men watched as if fascinated, the weird spectacle of the bobbing barrel as it circled and eddied in the maelstrom of shifting sand, now sinking from sight, again spewed forth, and finally, as the grinding and heaving in a measure ceased, disappearing altogether.

"Let's try fer th' water hole," Watkins urged. "We can make it afore th' storm breaks—"

As if in mockery of his words, a mighty gust of wind nearly swept the four men off their feet. Simultaneously, a writhing column appeared to the left; and in a moment they were enveloped in a stinging cloud of sand that stifled the breath, and made speech difficult.

"Down!" Williams yelled.

With one accord they dropped to the ground, and lay with heads covered until the force of the storm was spent. The Professor was first upon his feet. He bent over, and touched each man in turn on the shoulder.

Watkins, lifting his head, uttered a startled exclamation. Out of the whirling cloud of darkness had grown an evil face—a face that menaced him. He shuddered involuntarily, and then laughed at himself for a fanciful fool as, with the passing of the blinding gust, the Professor stood revealed.

"I took you fer th' Fiend himself," he said, as he slowly arose. "No wonder! In th' yaller light, an' with all this sand in my eyes, you sure looked somethin' fierce."

The Professor did not notice the remark.

"Come!" he insisted. "We must go on."

"Oh, Señor!" the Mexican implored, "*Hasta mañana!* We would rest."

"I ain't goin' a step farder," Watkins doggedly insisted. "Th' Arizony coyote tha'd pick my bones ain't whelped yet. It's me fer th' back track. We can make th' railroad in four days, an' be in Californy in a week. Wish I'd never left it to come on this here fool trip."

A strange light flickered in the leader's eyes. His lean fingers curved inward, like the claws of a bird of prey. He shot one glance at Watkins, a glance that was at once threatening and defiant, then turned to Williams.

"You will not desert me? It is only a f-f-few hours, now, a few h-hours!"

"I'll stand by you, Perfessor."

"And y-you, Pedro?"

"*Si, Señor.*"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," Watkins amended, apparently ashamed to find himself the one deserter. "We'll camp over thar fer th' night, an' in th' mornin' —wal, I'll agree to hold th' fort here fer twenty-four hours. Take th' camp outfit with you er not, jes' as you like, but you'd better march light. You say it's a few hours' journey, now, Perfessor? All right. If you don't show up by tomorrer night, I'll hit th' high places back to th' railroad."

With the suddenness characteristic of the comings and goings of desert storms, the wind had subsided; only by the murky atmosphere could the wanderers have told that the evil genii of the wilderness had passed that way. Presently night fell, and gathering around the fire of greaseroot which the Mexican built, they talked or were silent, by turns.

"I reckon he's plumb foolish," said Watkins, in a low tone, with a glance at the leader, who, with dripping candle-end in his fingers, was poring over a tattered parchment.

"You've got 'nother reckon comin'," retorted Williams. "Bein' tongue-tied don't keep his brains from workin' proper, does it? Naw!"

"It ain't that—it's this hull blamed business o' huntin' fer a gold mine whar nobody ever hear tell of thar *bein'* gold."

"*He* didn't let on 'twas a gold mine—he 'lowed he was after treasure."

"He's after blood, all right!" Watkins snorted. "Did y' see th' look he give me, a while back?—a look that meant murder, er I'm a Greaser."

"Ho!" Williams hooted, derisively. "What an onhealthy 'magination you've got, Watkins! Th' Perfessor—w'y, th' Perfessor wouldn't hurt a fly! Him 'n' his sister has lived nex' door to me fer years. I orter *know*. Miss Sarah, th' Perfessor's sister, she's a lady; but my Maggie don't think nothin' o' borrerin' soap, er whatever, from her. I hope he does find his gold mine—this time. Poor Miss Sarah won't have to keep boarders no more."

"You bin with him afore?"

"Three times. Fust time, cholera got his men; only two of us left. All he'd saved fer years gone like *that.*" Williams snapped his fingers. "Nex' time, Perfessor's hoss bucked; th' old man lit hard an' broke his laig. Last time we didn't go; Perfessor's money was in a bank that went bust."

"What d'*you* reckon he's lookin' fer?"

Williams scratched his head. As this did not, apparently, assist the process of enlightenment, he gave it up.

"I dunno. Might be he's trackin' these here cliff-dwellin' people. They do tell, Watkins, that thar was folks a-livin' an' cities built here in Ameriky afore Columbus diskivered it—"

"They do tell that the moon's made o' cheese!" Watkins mocked. "What's he sayin'?"

The Professor leaned over and thrust the parchment into Williams' hand.

"You see—" he traced the lines with trembling finger—"the route l-lies there, and there, and t-t-there. You will not f-fail me, with the end in s-s-sight? Promise."

And again Williams pledged his word.

"I am not a p-prophet, nor the s-son of a prophet," the Professor went on, dreamily, "but I had a vision. It was on the night after t-t-the p-parchment came into

my possession." The leader's eyes had in them the look of one who sees things unseen of other men. "Did you ever hear of the Seven Cities of Cibola, Williams?"

Williams rubbed his bristly jaws reflectively.

"What railroad be they on, Perfessor?"

"You don't understand? No m-matter. This is what I s-saw in my v-vision: I t-thought I was w-wandering in an accursed p-place that God had m-made in his anger. I c-came to a ravine, with a s-small s-stream trickling along the b-bottom of it. I s-s-stood above, on the brink of t-t-the ravine. S-suddenly I noted, on t-the opposite s-s-side, a f-flight of stone s-steps, cut in t-the solid rock; and there w-w-were endless processions of n-naked, bleeding slaves g-g-going up and c-coming down the s-steps. Where the f-flight ended at t-the top, a huge rock, r-roughly carved in the f-f-form of a sphinx, s-s-stood guard at the mouth of a c-cavern.

"As I w-watched the cowering f-figures, scourged by the m-m-masters' whips, it s-seemed to me that the slaves were c-c-conveying treasure t-to the cavern. Those who w-went up c-carried burdens, while those who c-came down were empty-handed." The Professor's voice trailed off. He gazed fixedly into the darkness.

"We'll go after that ravine fust thing in the mornin', sir," Williams cheerfully assured him. "We ain't a-goin' to lose out this time. The treasure's ourn, same's if we had it a'ready. Miss Sarah'll have all the roots an' bulbs she wants fer her garden, an'—say! My little Bill 'lows you'll get him a gardenin' outfit when you come back."

"Bless him! The little m-man."

The Professor gathered the warmth of the fire with shaking hands. He was silent for a space. When he spoke again, the swift shuttling of thought from the

present to something remote, outside the field of common comprehension, left his listeners bewildered.

"S-sometimes it seems a mistake—a dreadful m-m-mistake," he said, musingly. "There were t-two r-r-roads before m-me. * * * I might have had s-soft moonlight, and s-sweet paths, and the b-bird of joy singing in b-blossoming boughs overhead. * * * and a w-woman's hand in m-mine. * * * Williams, we mustn't disappoint Miss Sarah and l-l-little Bill."

"Plumb foolish!" Watkins reiterated, as he settled himself in his blanket for the night.

The sun rose in a conflagration of red and gold. The Professor's impatience would barely brook the delay necessary to the preparation of the morning meal; and that dispatched, he insisted upon setting out.

The three turned their faces toward the hills. The camp soon was left far behind; and now the country changed and became more broken, the ground, ridged with black volcanic rock, rising to knolls and dipping to hollows.

A heat-mist rolled from the earth in waves. The distant hills, as seen through the haze, were blurred in outline and indistinct. The Mexican, wiping the sweat from his eyes, trudged on uncomplainingly, but Williams called a halt.

"Ain't thar some other way 'round, Perfessor? These stones hurt my feet—"

Williams stopped and stared at the leader, who had not heard a word that was said. Watkins' remark: "Plumb foolish!" occurred to the man. Perhaps Watkins was right; in that case, Williams saw that no plea of his would turn the Professor's purpose. Whatever happened, he could not leave his companion. He set his pace, therefore, to that of the Professor, who hastened on toward the goal his imagination pictured, covering the ground with great strides.

The sunburned hills seemed to be no nearer, although for an hour the men kept on across country as the crow flies. The Professor muttered incessantly and unintelligibly. Williams could only hope that he would tire of the fruitless search.

Then, all in a moment, they were there, standing on the brink of a barranca that, in some volcanic action, had opened—a deep, narrow slit in the ground.

"Do you s-see it?" the Professor cried, pointing down and across the ravine to where, midway between top and foot and showing black in the wall of rock, the mouth of the cavern yawned beneath an overhanging rock. "Do you see it?" he cried again, a shrill note of triumph in his voice.

And Williams, his eyes widening with wonder, saw it all, as the leader had seen it in his vision. There were the cave, the guarding rock, roughly shaped in the form of a sphinx,—whether by nature or by the hand of man, could not be determined at that distance, —and leading from the mouth of the cave a rude flight of stone steps, that descended by turns and angles to the floor of the barranca.

The Professor's bowed form straightened; he seemed to grow taller as he stood, arms upflung to the skies.

"At last! At last!" His voice arose to a shriek. "After all these years—success! After sages have groped in vain—success! Oh, that I should be the one to find the way—*I!* Success! Success!"

Williams momentarily forgot the cause of the Professor's jubilation. Gazing into the man's twitching face, watching, as if fascinated, the writhing of the lean fingers as they plucked, now, and tore at the handkerchief knotted about the skinny throat, he could only grasp the one astonishing fact: The Professor's halting tongue had given utterance to unhalting speech!

Presently the strange attack passed; the leader grew calmer.

Wondering still, Williams submitted passively when the Professor laying hold of him, dragged him hither and thither in search of a place where they might attempt the descent in safety.

Thus occupied, the Professor apparently did not notice that which Williams, scarcely crediting the evidence of his own eyes, saw,—the toppling of bushes that stood on the opposite and higher bank; the rattling shower of earth and stones that preceded the dislodgement of the rock which kept guard at the cavern's mouth; the trembling of the ground underfoot.

The leader had espied a pathway where the outcropping of volcanic rock promised a foothold. He turned to the Mexican.

"Come!" he shouted.

But the man, his eyes distended with fear, was tracing the course of a fissure that suddenly had split the ground, separating him from his companions.

"No!" the fright-crazed man protested. He dropped on his knees, crossing himself and calling on his patron saint. "It is *el temblor, señor,—el temblor!*"

Even as he cried out, the ground under their feet undulated as the waves of the sea. Roused to their danger, the Professor held out his hands to Williams; together they leaped the widening fissure, and staggering, stumbling like drunken men, gained the solid ground. As they reached the Mexican's side and faced about, the earth crumbled before their eyes, a huge mass of rock and earth sliding with a muffled roar into the depths of the ravine. Again was felt the undulating motion, so sudden, so violent that they were thrown on their faces.

After a time the men who had so narrowly escaped death struggled to their feet, and stared at one another.

Then, in a moment, it all came back to the savant,—the vision and the quest. He remembered why he was there.

"We must get out o' this!" cried Williams, laying his hand on the Professor's shoulder; but the Professor was gazing straight over Williams' head—gazing with an awful look in his eyes at—what?

Involuntarily Williams sent his glance in the same direction. The gaping mouth of the cave no longer showed black against the wall of rock! Buried under tons of earth—thousands upon thousands of tons—that had filled the barranca almost level full, the cavern, the guarding sphinx, and the steps of stone were lost.

Williams' glance traveled back to the Professor's face. What he saw caused him to utter an exclamation. It was as if some long-dormant strain of savagery suddenly had changed the gentle, scholarly man of Williams' knowledge to something less than human. He was terrible in this, the hour of his defeat. His teeth were bared, fang-like, in a grimace of rage. Under the bristling gray eyebrows the eyes burned with a light that menaced reason.

As Williams gazed at the distorted visage, the gleam in the Professor's eyes went out as would a candle flame in a whiff of wind. He sank to the ground all strength gone from him, and passed his hand across his forehead in a bewildered fashion.

"The v-very sign!" he mumbled. "I did not s-show you the other p-p-parchment—see, here it is, t-the outline of the s-sphinx."

As Williams stooped to help the stricken man to his feet, the gleam of yellow metal caught his eye. In an instant he was on his knees, digging into the loosened earth with his bare hands. The Mexican, roused to action, joined him, and the two toiled silently, breathlessly.

Presently Williams sprang to his feet, and, seizing the Professor's shoulder shook him roughly.

"It's thar, Perfessor," he shouted into the other's inattentive ear. "Gold! *Gold!* GOLD!—enough to make us all rich as kings! Don't you *sabe?* The gold is *thar.*"

The Professor lifted a piteous face in wistful appeal to his companion.

"It was not to be, Williams, it w-was n-n-not to be. All m-m-my life I have b-been willing t-to deny myself anything, everything, t-to g-gain the end in v-view. I w-would have *starved* and died happy, if t-the w-w-work that lives after the workman—my w-work—had been d-done. Williams, here it w-was that the S-seven Cities of Cibola once s-stood; and down there —d-down there in that c-cavern—are t-t-tablets graven with a people's history. I have failed! I have failed!"

"It is the heat, no?" said the Mexican. "The señor is *muy loco.* No?"

HERE ENDS WEST WINDS, WRITTEN BY CALIFORNIA AUTHORS, AND ILLUSTRATED BY CALIFORNIA ARTISTS. THE BOOK EDITED BY HERMAN WHITAKER AND PUBLISHED BY PAUL ELDER AND COMPANY AT THEIR TOMOYÉ PRESS IN SAN FRANCISCO, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF JOHN SWART, IN THE YEAR NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FOURTEEN